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JACK HARKAWAY AND THE SPY.



Barboni dropped Emily, who fell senseless in the roadway. His pistol also fell from his grasp, and he in vain tried to cover his face with his hands, to protect himself from the furious attack. "Now you've got it," said Jack. "I've been living for this day."

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Jack Harkaway and the Spy.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEADLY AMBUSH.

ALL this time the contessa had been a passive observer of the scene.

She stood by herself, leaning against the rough and rocky wall, seeing all and saying nothing.

"On, *donna bella*," cried the brigand at length, "fly from Naples! It would spare you many perils! You have enemies!"

"I fear them not."

"I can see what will happen to you, though I see as through a glass—darkly," continued Barboni, in a tone of deep sympathy, whether real or affected.

"My place is by my husband's side," answered Emily, bravely.

"His life is threatened, and your liberty. Persuade him to leave this land of intrigue and mystery."

"You fear him already," said Emily.

"I? No; Barboni never yet felt fear," rejoined the brigand, drawing himself up proudly.

"All I will say is this," Emily continued. "My husband and I have seen something of life in various parts of the world, and you will find him no ordinary man to deal with."

"*Gorpo di Christol!*" cried Barboni. "I am sure of grinding him to powder, as if I had him under my heel."

"Don't make so sure of that."

"I have taken an interest in you, why, I know not," said the brigand, more mildly. "But I would save you from the perils that threaten you."

"If my husband has sworn to kill you, he will do it, in spite of the apparent odds in your favor, which makes me think that you have all the strength on your side."

Barboni laughed defiantly.

"This is the last time we meet as friends," he said.

"That is not my fault," replied Emily.

"Pardon me, signora, you are to blame. Leave Naples, take your husband and his friends with you."

"At the bidding of a bandit?"

Emily laughed scornfully as she uttered these words.

"No matter! We are enemies from this day forth! You call me bandit and brigand," he added bitterly.

"But I have the authority of the church for what I do."

"The church?"

"Yes, I have a dispensation from Rome, for I am in reality fighting the battle of the exiled King of Naples, the battle of the Bourbon against the excommunicated King of Italy."

"But you do not understand our politics. Go, signora, and remember in time to come that Barboni offered you his friendship."

"Which I rejected as became me," answered Emily.

"Adieu," he said, "but stay. We meet again soon in Naples. I have promised to expose the infidelity of your husband. You shall

see in reality what you beheld in the globe of crystal."

"Am I at liberty to go now?" asked Emily, taking no notice of his remarks about Jack's inconstancy, and firmly believing them to be a tissue of invention.

"Certainly. Shall I have the honor to conduct you to your carriage?" replied the brigand with the finished politeness which he could assume when he chose.

Emily slipped a coin into the sybil's hand, and prepared to follow him to the carriage, which was in waiting a short distance from the grotto where they had left it.

At this moment the dwarf came running into the cave in a state of alarm and excitement.

"The soldiers—the soldiers!" he exclaimed.

Barboni turned back directly and seemed to share the dwarf's agitation.

"Where?" he asked.

"Coming toward the defile."

"How many of them?"

"Two companies," said the dwarf.

"That can't be much less than three hundred men," replied Barboni. "I am betrayed, but woe to the enemies!"

He cast a withering, vindictive glance at Emily.

"We part. Adieu once more," he continued.

"You have rejected all my advances. The war has begun."

With these words he quitted the cavern, and ascended the ravine, clambering from rock to rock with the agility of a wild cat.

"What shall we do?" asked Emily, clinging to the contessa.

"Stay here for the present," replied the contessa; "we have nothing to fear."

The dwarf danced about the floor, panting with delight.

"Blood in the air!" he cried. "I can smell it! Blood on the trees! I have seen it hanging on the leaves all day—blood in the dusty road—blood everywhere, Cospetto! We shall have some fun presently!"

And the little demon rubbed his hand and chuckled with glee.

The snakes ran quickly about, and the wolf licked his chops as if he, too, sniffed the coming banquet.

"Ha, Remus," said the dwarf, patting the neck of the wolf. "you, too, can smell it! What a feast we shall have; eh, my beauty? Blood, blood! Oh, I love to see it run!"

Emily shrank horror-stricken from the little savage.

The contessa, meanwhile, was calm and collected, and awaited what was to happen with indifference.

Barboni had let fall before Emily some hints to the effect that he was encouraged in his brigandage by persons in high quarters.

Nor was this improbable.

Only a few years had passed since Ferdinand II. had been driven from the throne of Naples by Garibaldi.

Naples then became a part of united Italy,

under the sanction of Napoleon III., who was then, as the Emperor of Prussia is now, the arbiter of the destinies of Continental Europe.

But Victor Emanuel, the King of Italy, was the avowed enemy of the Pope, while the ex-king of Naples was the ally and friend of Pío Nono.

Therefore Rome encouraged all internal dissensions in Naples, and smiled upon the brigands.

The ex-king of Naples hoped some day to come back to his throne.

Barboni made no secret of his being aided by Rome and the exiled Bourbon.

But we must quit the brigand chief for a while, and return to the Villa Reale, where we left Ada, who had just picked up the note which Emily, in hot agitation, had let fall.

"I will take it at once to Monday," she muttered.

Accordingly she hurried home, and found her husband lazily smoking a cigarette in a room which he had selected as his own on the ground floor.

The heat of Naples suited him.

It was so much like that of his native land.

"Come in, Ada," he exclaimed. "Bless um heart. Give um old man um kiss then."

"Don't be stupid, Matabella," replied Ada.

"Missis has just gone off in the Contessa de Malafedi's carriage, and she let fall this note in the Villa Reale."

"Give um here um letter, I mean," said Monday.

He took it from the girl's hand and his face grew grave.

"Better show this to Mast' Jack up-stairs; I go show him," replied Monday.

Ada had great confidence in Monday's judgment, and she felt that she had done her duty.

The four friends were together, and looked up as Monday entered.

"What's in the wind now?" asked Jack.

Monday related what Ada had told him, and handed Jack the letter, which he read aloud.

"This is a plant," said Jack. "What is your opinion, Carden?"

"I have no doubt of it," replied Tom, getting up and opening a case of pistols which lay on a side table.

"What are you going to do?" asked Harvey.

"We're going to fight, aren't we? I am only making ready."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the little coxswain, "I'm on like a naval ram!"

There was a sound of wheels at the door, which caused Monday to run down.

Presently he returned, saying:

"His excellency, the general commanding-in-chief."

"Gen. Claidini," answered Jack; "that is fortunate. Show him in."

The general entered and bowed very politely to the Englishmen.

The object of his visit was to express his regret that nothing had yet been heard of the robbers.

An account of the audacious robbery at the

San Carlo Theater by Barboni had appeared in all the Italian papers.

It had attracted the attention of the king and his ministers, who had sent a strong dispatch to the general commanding at Naples, reprimanding him for not having captured the bandits.

"I have this day," he exclaimed, "sent two companies of infantry, who are those excellent riflemen we call Bersaglieri, and their instructions are to scour the country."

"In what direction, may I ask?" said Jack. "Between Naples and the grotto of the Cumæan sybil," he answered.

"By George, the very quarter!" exclaimed Jack. "Read this, general."

Cialdini gravely perused the note and listened to such particulars as Jack gave him.

"This is very extraordinary," he said; "more especially as the chief of the secret police has to day told me he has reasons for suspecting the contessa."

"Of what?"

"Of some connection with this Barboni."

"Indeed!"

"At present," continued the general, "we are certain about nothing. Vague suspicions fill our minds. At any moment something may happen which will clear up the mystery."

"Pardon me, general, if I cut short the discussion," remarked Jack.

"Ah, certainly. Your wife is in danger."

"May I prefer one request?"

"By all means," replied Cialdini.

"If I can meet your Bersaglieri near the cave of the sybil will you authorize me to lead them to the rescue of my wife and the capture of Barboni?"

"Willingly. Give me pen, ink and paper. I will write a line to the officer in command, giving him instructions to search the cavern," answered Cialdini.

"Thank you, general. That is all I ask," said Jack.

The authority was hastily written, and the general took his leave, exacting a promise that he should hear the result of their expedition as soon as possible.

He further expressed a hope that Mrs Harkaway might be in no danger from the trap which the brigand had laid for her.

Monday was sent to the stables to order four horses to be saddled and brought around to the Strada Di Toledo in the shortest possible space of time.

In the course of his excursions into the country, Carden had visited the cave of the sybil.

Consequently he knew the way, and the four companions started at a hand-gallop.

When within a mile of the cavern, they met the two companies of soldiers, of whom the general commander-in-chief had spoken.

Jack at once dismounted, and saluting the officer in command, handed him the letter written by the general.

The officer read it, and said that he and his men were at Mr. Harkaway's disposal.

He gave the order "Quick march!" and the soldiers set forward.

They were a serviceable body of men, well equipped, and had seen service at Custozza against the Austrians.

The officer recommended the four friends to ride behind, as they were civilians, and the soldiers would not like them in front.

This request was fortunate in the result for Jack and his companions.

On marched the Bersaglieri, unconscious of danger, and least of all were they suspicious of a deadly ambushade.

Half an hour brought them to the defile, which they entered, four abreast.

Jack and his friends were the last to come within its sombre and forbidding shades.

Suddenly a terrible fire was opened upon them from both sides of the defile.

White wreaths of smoke arose and were followed by flashes of fire, which in their turn gave place to loud reports.

Half their number bit the dust.

In vain did the survivors look for their concealed enemies.

Not one was to be seen.

The brigands fired from their sheltering

places of concealment, and presented no mark to the Italian soldiers, who discharged their pieces at random.

Panic-stricken, they turned and fled, falling in increased numbers at each step. Their officers were all killed, and a mere handful of men huddled together at the mouth of the pass.

The four friends, horror-stricken at this massacre, dismounted.

Jack tried to rally them.

"Follow me!" he cried, snatching a sword from the dead body of an officer. "Follow me up the cliff. If we can only gain the summit, we can dislodge the rabble."

The soldiers were brave, and burned to avenge the death of their comrades.

Jack and Harvey, followed by Tom Carden, and the little coxswain, climbed up the rocks.

The Bersaglieri followed them valiantly.

This movement, being at the entrance to the pass, was unperceived by the brigands, who fancied the soldiers had fled routed.

The first intimation they had of their being surprised in rear and flank was a discharge as deadly as that they had poured into the companies.

About a hundred brigands had descended the sides, emerging from their places of concealment to plunder the dead and put an end to the wounded.

Only seventy soldiers escaped from the massacre.

But those were armed with breech-loaders and well supplied with ammunition.

The brigands were all leaving, or had left their shelter.

Consequently they presented as easy a mark as the Bersaglieri had done when they marched unsuspectingly into the defile.

Volley after volley was sent down upon them under Jack's instructions.

The little coxswain had seized a rifle and was as coolly potting the brigands as if he had been in his father's park in England shooting rooks.

"Here's a lark," remarked Harvey. "That makes seven."

The brigands found they were caught in their own trap, and had been too hasty.

Above the sharp crack of the rifles and the ping-thud of the bullets arose the well known whistle of Barboni.

He was calling off his men.

The next moment the pass was clear, and not a brigand was to be seen.

They had lost heavily, however.

Not so heavily as the soldiers, but nevertheless, their bodies lay thickly piled upon those of their enemies.

"We must go to the cave," said Jack. "Will you, Carden, stay here with Campbell, while Harvey and I go and look after Emily?"

"What shall I do?" asked Carden.

"Keep the pass. Stay; I forget you know nothing about soldiering. I will throw the men out as skirmishers."

Turning to the Bersaglieri, he added, in Italian:

"My lads, your officers are all dead. I am an English officer; will you be led by me?"

An affirmative shout arose.

The men saw he had so far saved them, given them their revenge, and scattered the enemy.

Giving the necessary word of command, he threw them out in a double line of skirmishers, telling them to take advantage of the rocks and shrubs for shelter, and to shoot any brigands they might see.

"Though," he said, "I don't think the dastardly miscreants will dare to show their faces again."

Having disposed of the men to the best of his ability, and to his satisfaction, he descended the rocky slope with Harvey at his heels.

Running along the road, his pace was quickened by hearing the cries of a woman.

Surely it was Emily's voice.

This thought lent wings to him, and he reached the grotto in an incredibly short space of time, trampling rudely over the heaps of dead and dying in his headlong haste.

It was as he supposed.

Outside the cavern he saw Emily struggling in the arms of Barboni.

"Help—help!" she cried. "Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?"

"Not far off, my darling," he replied. "Hold on!"

The contessa was standing by the side of the carriage, and waved her servants back, for they seemed to evince an inclination to help Emily.

The main body of the brigands was already in full retreat, so that the robber chief was alone.

Enraged at the unexpected loss his men had sustained, he seemed to have forgotten his pledged word, for he had seized Emily just as she was about to enter the contessa's carriage.

"You're my prisoner," he had said, "and must come with me. In open warfare there is no friendship and no faith. It must have been so sooner or later."

Jack rushed upon him like an avalanche.

He was afraid to use his sword, and Harvey did not like to fire, as the brigand held Emily in front of him as a sort of shield.

"Duck, Jack! duck your head!" cried Harvey.

The warning did not come a moment too soon.

Barboni discharged a pistol, which sent a ball harmlessly over Jack's head.

Clenching his sledge-hammer fist, Jack struck him in the mouth.

His teeth were loosened, and his lips cut, which prevented him from whistling for aid.

"How do you like that, old fellow?" asked Jack, giving it to him right and left, straight from the shoulder.

A shower of blows rained in the brigand's face.

Each blow, as Harvey said afterward, was like the kick from a horse.

Barboni dropped Emily, who fell senseless in the roadway.

His pistol also fell from his grasp, and he in vain tried to cover his face with his hands, to protect himself from the furious attack.

"Now you've got it," said Jack. "I've been living for this day, and you'll know this what an Englishman can do with his bunch of fives, my gay moss trooper."

Seeing that Emily was safe, and conscious of having well punished the brigand, his spirits arose.

"That's a return for the bullet you gave me," he went on chaffingly, "for I believe you and the Prince of Villanova are one and the same; only you have no beard and the prince has one. That's for stealing my wife's jewels. That's for telling lies. That's for writing letters, and setting traps. That's—"

He left off speaking, for Barboni turned tail and fled away after his men as fast as his feet could carry him, muttering indistinct threats of vengeance as he went.

"Shall I drop him?" asked Harvey.

"Yes, fire, fire," exclaimed Jack. "Why should you show him any mercy? Fire, I tell you."

Harvey leveled his revolver, and fired several shots without effect.

"Hang the fellow! He's out of range," he said in a tone of vexation.

Jack turned around to Emily, and saw the Contessa di Malafedi bending over her.

"Oh, the poor creature," she exclaimed.

"What we have suffered, Mr. Harkaway, no one can imagine."

"I should think, madam," replied Jack, "that you had been perfectly at your ease."

"I! How can you suppose so?"

"It is chiefly owing to you that this has happened."

"Pray do not think so harshly of me," said the contessa, feelingly. "What is there—what can there be in common between me and that dreadful man?"

"That is a question for your own conscience to answer," rejoined Jack, dryly.

"I declare to you, before the Holy Virgin, that I am not to blame; dear Emily will tell you the same."

"It matters little to me; I shall be on my guard against you in future, and I daresay the Neapolitan police will pay you a little delicate attention."

The contessa drew herself up proudly—haughtily almost.

"You are insolent, sir!" she said, while her dark eyes flashed angrily.

"Possibly," replied Jack. "I can't tell lies; it is not my form."

"Is it worth your while to make an enemy of me?"

"I don't care a rush for all the harm you can do me, now I have found you out," said Jack.

"Very well, sir," she replied. "You have insulted me quite enough. We understand one another."

"Oh, perfectly!" said Jack, carelessly. "As you brought my wife here, I shall take the liberty of using your carriage to convey her back again, though it will be the last time she will ride in it."

"She shall not ride in it now, since you demand it as a right and not as a favor," said the contessa.

"I am sorry to be obliged to contradict a lady in your position," said Jack, "but she shall, and to show you I am not to be trifled with, I shall leave you to get back to Naples as well as you can."

"My servants will—"

"Dick," said Jack, interrupting the contessa.

"What is it old man?" asked Harvey, who was supporting Emily, she having just come to herself.

"Is your popgun loaded?"

"Yes."

"Jump up on the box by the side of the coachman. Show him the pistol; let the footman stop to attend upon his mistress. This carriage is ours. Carden will tell the soldiers to bring our horses back. Twig?"

"Rather!" replied Harvey. "I like the idea much."

In spite of the contessa's protestations, Jack lifted Emily into the carriage and got in by her side.

"You can stay with your friend, the sybil," he exclaimed, "or perhaps Barboni will come and comfort you. I'm not going to be made a fool of any more by you. It is not good enough, by a long way."

The contessa gnashed her teeth with rage, while the dwarf danced wildly about, and made a score of grimaces, as if to show that he enjoyed her discomfiture.

"You will repent this," said the contessa, her dark eyes full of an intense passion.

"Make the cove drive on, Dick," said Jack, by way of an answer.

"Right," replied Harvey.

"Shoot the beggar like a brat if he turns nasty."

"No fear."

They drove to the extremity of the defile, and then Jack called the troops down.

He made a little speech, complimenting them on their bravery, and assuring them that they had done their duty under very trying circumstances.

Then he ordered them to bivouac where they were and attend to the wounded while he would report to the general, and make arrangements for sending reinforcements and provisions without delay.

The men gave him a hearty cheer.

Tom Carden and the little coxswain mounted their horses, leaving the other two in charge of the soldiers, and Tom went on in front, while Campbell brought up the rear, after the fashion of outriders.

Emily was very weak, and hysterical during the journey, for the whole affair had given her a fright and upset her nervous system.

Jack was very kind to her, and by degrees she recovered herself, leaning her head on his shoulder and pressing his hand lovingly, while she related all that had passed between her and the hated Barboni.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPY OF THE BRIGANDS.

WHEN the news of the fight between the soldiers and brigands reached Naples it created a profound sensation.

General Cialdini was furious.

It had been a sharp affair while it lasted, and his men had suffered very heavy losses.

The central Italian government would call him to a severe account for it, and his credit was concerned in exterminating Barboni and his band without delay.

This, however, was more easily talked about than done.

Barboni was one of those mysterious beings who could never be found when he was wanted.

But when he was not wanted he was everywhere, as many travelers stopped and robbed could testify.

Jack had a long interview with the general, in which he tried to impress upon him the belief that Barboni and Prince Villanova were one and the same person.

But, as before, he failed in forcing this conviction on his mind.

He spoke of Bigamini, and related all that the little man had told him about being captured by brigands and escaping from a castle.

The general heard him attentively, and said:

"You may be right, Mr. Harkaway, though I regret that I cannot agree with you. Nor should I hold myself justified in arresting the prince without further evidence. I must have proof—solid proof."

"It shall be my business to obtain it for you," answered Jack.

"Do that and I will act immediately."

"I propose," continued Jack, "to visit Castel Inferno, where the prince lives."

"If you are right in your conjectures, will it be safe for you to do so?" asked the general.

"Not unattended."

"Well, you shall have an escort of soldiers, though I trust my poor followers will not fall into another cowardly ambush."

"Give me twenty men," said Jack. "That will be quite enough. I only want them to see me enter the castle, and if I do not come out again, they will know where to look for me."

"Shall you go unattended by your friends?"

"I shall only take Bigamini with me, for this is simply

an exploring journey. I want to form my own opinion, and I can act afterwards."

"Precisely. When do you want an escort?"

"To-morrow morning."

"It shall be ready."

Jack thanked the general for his courtesy, and going home, sent Monday to the address given by Bigamini, ordering that worthy to call upon him at once.

When Bigamini was announced, Jack was in the drawing-room with his friends.

Dinner was over, and they were sitting in the flower-bedecked balcony, listening to Emily's graphic description of the horrors of the sybil's cave.

He apologized for his temporary absence, and went to see his visitor in another room, as he did not wish his wife to know anything about his proposed exploring expedition on the morrow.

Bigamini looked more nervous and frightened than on a former occasion.

"Well, my 'little man,'" said Jack, "how goes it? Sit down and have a glass of wine."

Bigamini took a seat and drank some of the wine which was poured out for him.

"I'm a poor creature, sir," he remarked; "what little nerve I ever had when I was a happy Smiffins, is quite gone."

"If you haven't got any courage, you must manage to get along without it," said Jack, cheerily.

"It isn't that, sir. I've got courage, only when I want it, it goes out—oozes out, I may say, at my finger's ends, and out of my toes, and even through my hair."

"What has upset you now?"

"I've heard about your brush with the brigands, sir. Very fine! The Italians say you rallied and handled them splendidly."

"I did the best I could," answered Jack, modestly.

"Won't old Thingamijig be in a way over it?"

"Who's he?"

"Why, Barboni. I don't like to speak his name out loud, so I call him old Thingamijig."

"You don't suppose he's here, do you?" asked Jack, laughing.

"I don't know, sir; couldn't say for certain," replied Bigamini. "He's a wonderful man. Would you kindly permit me to look under the table?"

"Rot! Sit where you are and have some more wine. Get up some Dutch courage. You can't be allowed to live in such a state of mortal funk."

"Of course, sir. Your word's law to me in your own house—and anywhere else, for that matter. But may I be a stiff un if I didn't think I saw——"

"It's all bosh, I tell you!" interrupted Jack.

"Very well, sir. Since you're so determined, bosh it shall be! though if old Barboni—old Thingamy, I mean—were to catch me here, he'd think I was splitting on him, and there would be the deuce and all to pay."

"He shan't touch you. Are you not under my protection?"

Bigamini laughed one of his favorite artificial chuckles as he said:

"I'm afraid, Mr. Harkaway, the brigand will be one too many for you."

"Lor' bless your innocent soul, sir!" exclaimed Bigamini. "If Barboni said he'd hev me, not you, nor all the soldiers, nor all the priests in Naples, could save me. He's an awful man, and he gives me the cold shivers to think of him. Ever had the cold shivers, sir?"

"No, nor don't want to," said Jack.

"It's just like having icy water out of a well in winter poured down your backbone, sir."

"Is it? Then I don't envy you the sensation."

"Excuse me, sir, if I trouble you with my symptoms. I'm a miserable Bigamini, but I oughten't to murmur at my lot."

"If you've done talking, perhaps you will listen to me."

"Certainly, sir—only don't talk too loud. Old Thingamy's got spies everywhere, and my doom would be settled if he knew I was here with you—betraying of him."

"My house is private; he can't get in here," answered Jack.

"Didn't he come and steal the jewels, sir, from the ladies?" asked Bigamini.

This question rather staggered Jack.

"Yes," he answered, "and I'd wish I'd caught him at it. But what I want to tell you is that I shall want you as a guide to-morrow."

"Where to go, sir?"

"To the castle from which you escaped."

"Suppose you can't find it?" asked Bigamini, who seemed considerably taken aback.

"You'll have to do your best, and I shall pay you well for your trouble."

"Do you and I go alone, sir?"

"No. I shall have a military escort."

"Soldiers!"

"Yes; why not?"

"I wouldn't sir, I'd go quite alone," answered Bigamini. "The sight of soldiers angers old Thingamy. He don't like 'em. It may cost us our lives."

"You seem to know a good deal about this Barboni," said Jack, eyeing him suspiciously, as what Carden had suggested to him came into his mind.

"I couldn't be among them without knowing something," replied Bigamini.

Jack made no answer, as he paced the room impatiently.

"If you think I'm deceiving of you, sir, I'll go away, and there's no harm done," pursued Bigamini.

"No—no, I'm satisfied," said Jack.

"Perhaps you think I'm a spy, sir?"

And Bigamini laughed heartily at the transparent absurdity of such an insane idea.

"Ah!" he added, "it all comes of making a false step. He knows I've done a little bigamy, and he thinks I must be a duffer all over."

Jack stopped in his walk before Bigamini, and observed that a tear was trickling down the tallowy cheek of the worthy man, as if he felt much hurt.

"Forgive me, my good fellow, if I spoke hastily," he exclaimed.

"It's hard to be suspected," replied Bigamini with a whimper.

Bigamini at all times was comical, but Bigamini with a whimper was irresistible.

Jack laughed in spite of himself.

"You won't think hardly of me any more, sir?" said Bigamini.

"No."

"Nor be down upon me for having had two wives, and been and done a little bit of bigamy?"

"What has that to do with it? You be faithful to me, and you shall be rewarded. Help me in every way you can to find out this brigand stronghold, and I'm your friend for life."

Bigamini's face cleared.

"Oh, what a sweet and lovely thing it is, Mr. Harkaway, to be trusted," he said, rapturously.

"Try and deserve my confidence."

"I will, sir, I will. Oh, if old Thingamy was only to hear me, he'd collar me off, and send you my ears, likewise nose, ditto big toes, in a basket. What should I be without my big toes?"

This idea seemed to strike Bigamini very forcibly, and he contemplated his boots with affection for some moments.

"I am much more likely to have his head than he is to cut off any part of you, my man," replied Jack.

"I hopeso, sir. I should like to see his head stuck on a pole and chuck oranges at it, or rotten eggs, or 'taters. I shouldn't be particular," said Bigamini.

"Well, you can go now. Come again to-morrow, about the afternoon. On second thought, I shan't start till the heat of the day is over. The soldiers can be sent on to the ferry over the Volturmo, and I will drive you to the spot."

"Thank you, Mr. Harkaway, sir. I feel as if I wasn't quite such a miserable Bigamini, when I'm with you, sir."

"That's all right," said Jack.

"Yes, sir; I'm more like a happy Smiffins."

"Indeed!"

"I don't seem to have the cold shivers so bad."

"Get along," said Jack. "When you come into the place, there is no knowing when one is going to get rid of you."

"I'm off, sir. Going, going, as the auctioneers say, and I shall be gone soon, knocked down to the highest bidder. But——"

"What?"

"I should like to have one peep under that there table, sir. Old Thingamy might be there, or some detective from London to have me up for bigamy."

Jack's only answer to this was to take Bigamini by the elbow, after the fashion of a policeman when he has a man in custody.

He gave his arm a twist, and very dexterously ran him out of the room.

"The fellow gets to be a nuisance," he muttered, as he slammed the door.

A sepulchral voice sounded through the keyhole.

"Good day, sir. Pardon the thoughtless words of a miserable Bigamini."

"There is no end of him," muttered Jack.

But he heard footsteps descend the stairs, and looking out of the window, he saw the little man creeping along the street in his usual nervous manner.

But Bigamini did not go home, if his dingy lodging could be dignified with such a name.

He went to a place where they let out horses, and putting down some gold, he hired a horse for two days.

At first they looked suspiciously at him, and it was only when he produced more gold as a deposit or security that they let him have the animal.

Bigamini seemed to have a great deal of gold money for so poor-looking a man, yet it was no business of theirs to ask him how he came by it.

Jumping on the horse, and riding it very fairly, he took the road to Capua, and once out of the city, he rode as if a legion of fiends were after him.

The fact was, he had some distance to go—nearly forty miles, and time was an object to him.

He reached the river Volturmo in three hours and a half, and crossed over in the ferry, left his horse with the ferryman, and proceeded on his journey on foot.

The way was evidently well known to him, for he did not pause or falter once.

It was growing dark after he had gone three miles, and the lofty towers of an ancient castle could only be made out dimly in the deepening twilight.

Striking boldly into a thicket of trees at the foot almost of the aged castle, he pursued a tangled path.

Then he stopped and whistled three times.

A man in a slouched hat and green cloak emerged from behind a tree.

He lowered his carbine at seeing Bigamini, and motioned him to pass.

A little further on arose a pile of rocks, neither very high nor very extensive, but in the middle of which was a yawning hole.

In front of this stood another man, who also allowed him to pass.

Stooping a little, for the hole was not large, Bigamini entered what was a spacious cavern.

Inside he met two more guards, who demanded a password, and, on his saying "Gaeta," he met with no opposition.

The outer cavern led into another, which was larger, and from which numerous passages branched off, showing that the rocks were honeycombed in various directions.

In one corner a lamp swung by an iron chain from the ceiling, and revealed at least fifty men who were lounging about, some engaged in card-playing, others smoking, drinking, sleeping, others again amusing themselves with hazard, as the rattling of the dice testified.

"Ha!" exclaimed one, jumping up, "here is our little Bigamini, the prince of spies."

"Good evening, Florio," replied Bigamini.

"The chief has been expecting you. *Buon giorno.*"
 "You have had hot work, I'm told," said Bigamini.
 "Hotter than we dared for," answered Florio. "Santo o! I thought at one time we should none of us come back alive. It was that cursed Englishman who rallied the Bersaglieri."
 "Did you lose many men?"
 "Per Baccho! More than enough. We left forty dead in the roadway," growled the brigand.
 "Will you let his highness know that I am here? Time is valuable," said Bigamini.
 "I don't know that you won't get the blame of that ambush," said Florio. "Cospetto! Why did you not send us word that the soldiers were coming?"
 "Because I did not know it myself. They did not leave the town purposely. But send for the lieutenant as quickly as possible, and give me some drink. I've ridden at speed from Naples," exclaimed Bigamini.
 He seemed quite at home with those fierce, wild-looking men, many of whom crowded around and asked him a variety of questions.

Florio set wine before him, and dispatched a messenger along one of the winding galleries in the rear.
 All Bigamini's nervousness disappeared now that he was with the brigands, into whose cave he had penetrated as fearlessly as if he had known them all his life. He strutted about like a little bantam cock, and evidently knew that they thought highly of him.
 In fact, he was the chief spy of the brigand chief Barboni.

Like many other Englishmen that fled to Naples in desperate circumstances, he had joined the robbers.
 His cringing manners, and his sly nature, eminently qualified him for the part he had assumed.
 We have seen how easily he imposed on Jack.
 Nor was Harkaway the only one taken in by his cleverness.

Still, when he was ushered into the presence of the lieutenant of the band, he put aside the free and easy manner he had used among the inferior members, and was once more subservient and crawling.

The lieutenant was a man of middle height, thin, with dark skin, as if he had been exposed to the sun of the arid zone, and he was the more remarkable for having only one arm.

He sat at a small table in a cavern of moderate dimensions, which was approached by a winding passage.

Bigamini stood before him, and his examination was carried on in English.

"Wait outside, Florio, and be prepared with a file of men to shoot this rascal if I find him a traitor," said the lieutenant.

Florio retired to the doorway, and Bigamini once more trembled in every limb.

CHAPTER III.

THE REPORT.

"Good Signor Hunstoni," exclaimed the wretched man, "I have ever been faithful. Once, when I was a happy Snifflin, I was unfaithful to my wife, but—"

"Silence. We know that we have the power to send you to England in charge of the police to be tried for bigamy; that we shall do, probably, when we no longer want you," interrupted the lieutenant, who had been addressed as Hunstoni.

"No, no; do not deliver me to my countrymen. You will see that I have been faithful. I have, indeed, on the honor of a miserable Bigamini."

"Why, then, had we no notice of soldiers approaching the sibil's cave?"

"They did not leave the city for that purpose."

"Harkaway knew it."

"Yes, but he did not tell me. It appears that he went to the general because Emily—that is, Mrs. Harkaway—dropped the master's letter and her maid picked it up, and gave it to her husband, a black man, who handed it to Mr. Harkaway."

"Well," said Hunstoni, stolidly.

"Harkaway took it to the general and asked for troops to capture the master, Barboni, and the two companions of Bersaglieri were exercising in the neighborhood. He received from the general a letter placing them at his disposal."

"And then?"

"Then the attack, signor. On the word of a wretched Bigamini, it is the truth."

"You should manage better than this," said Hunstoni.

"We suffered a very heavy loss yesterday owing to your carelessness and the bravery of that infernal Harkaway."

"Is the master angry with me," asked Bigamini.

"He is. Harkaway fought him in a way he didn't understand."

"How was that, signor?"

"With his fists. Regular old English fashion," replied the lieutenant, who, though he had become a brigand, did not forget the manners and customs of his native land.

"What a lark?" said Bigamini, forgetting himself.

"Silence!" roared the lieutenant.

"Yes, signor. I forgot I was a wretched Bigamini, and thought I was once again a happy—"

A blow from Hunston's fist made him stagger and effectually closed his mouth.

"Perhaps that will stop your jaw," he said.

The little man wiped the blood from his lips and glared from under his brows at the lieutenant.

"Now tell me what you have to tell. What's your report?"

The latter continued:

"Mr. Harkaway is coming to the castle to-morrow to visit Prince Villanova," replied Bigamini.

"Who accompanies him?"

"Twenty soldiers, and myself as guide."

"What time will he reach the castle?"

"Evening."

"Good!" exclaimed Hunstoni. "What else?"

"The chief of police in Naples—"

"Sforza?"

"Yes, signor. Sforza has dispatched one of his cleverest detective officers to search out the cave."

"The devil he has!" exclaimed Hunstoni.

"The detective's name is Steffano. I know him well, and was concealed under the table in the police office when he received his instructions."

"How is he going to do it?" asked Hunstoni, raising his eyebrows incredulously.

"Steffano can assume as many disguises as Proteus," replied Bigamini.

"What's his plan?"

"To-night he will pass by the ferry, where there have been several stoppages of travelers lately, and he expects to fall into your excellency's hands."

"Not at all unlikely. We have Ludovico there, with ten men, at this very moment."

"He will be dressed as a respectable tradesman, and pretend to be very deaf and stupid."

"You are sure of this?"

"On the honor of a miserable—"

"I thought I had knocked that humbug out of you," interrupted Hunstoni, fiercely. "Don't try it on me. When I'm engaged in business I like things short and sweet."

Bigamini apologized, and said it should not occur again.

"I will see Barboni," continued Hunstoni, "and make your report. His face is much better, but he will not be able to see any one yet awhile. Harkaway's punches leave marks."

"Tell him that I was not to blame in the matter of yesterday," pleaded Bigamini.

"I will. Rest yourself in the cave for a few hours. You shall have your instructions by daybreak, when you must return to Naples."

"Thank you, signor," said Bigamini.

"Florio," said the lieutenant.

"Si, signor," answered the brigand.

"If any prisoners are brought in to-night, let me know at once."

Florio nodded, and then turning to the passage, exclaimed:

"Ho, there! torches at once for the lieutenant."

Two men instantly appeared bearing torches, and Hunstoni disappeared, with one before and one behind him, along the narrow passage, which seemed to lead into the bosom of the solid rock.

Bigamini returned to the brigands' cave, where he found plenty to amuse him.

The men were accustomed to face death, and they knew that if found out and captured by the police or government troops, they would either be hung or shot.

Most of them were criminals who had fled from justice.

When a man's life, or at least his liberty, hangs upon a slender thread, he is apt to get reckless.

Many of their friends and companions had fallen the day before; the wounded they had carried off, and they were being attended to by a fraudulent doctor, who had joined the band, in a secret cavern.

The fate of their comrades did not weigh upon the desperadoes.

Drink circulated freely, and many indulged in singing and dancing.

Bigamini lighted his pipe, which he preferred to the Italian cigarette, and applauded vigorously at each effort.

It was nearly daybreak when he rolled off a wine cask intoxicated, amidst the laughter of the brigands.

At this juncture a noise was heard at the entrance of the cavern. The merriment was hushed in a moment.

"It is the night watch," cried Florio. They have brought in a captive."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEAF PRISONER.

THIS exclamation partly aroused Bigamini, who raised himself upon his elbow, and regarded the entrance to the cave curiously.

The brigands, who savored very strongly of oil, garlic and stale tobacco smoke, also craned their necks in expectation, for as they all took their turn of duty, they all shared alike in any booty or ransom money.

For instance, the chief took a tenth part, the lieutenant a twentieth, and the rest was equally divided.

Thus, if one thousand pound were extracted from the friends of a captive, Barboni would have one hundred pounds, Hunstoni fifty pounds, and what remained would be given in equal shares to the members of the band.

The prisoner was led in blindfolded, and appeared to be a highly respectable citizen of Naples.

His rings, watch and chain, and saddle bag, taken in conjunction with his clothes, denoted that he was well to do.

Florio took possession of him in the outer cavern, where Bigamini had made his report to the lieutenant.

Here the bandages was removed from his eyes, but the strong rope which had fastened his wrists together remained.

"You can sit down," said Florio, pointing to a seat roughly cut in the rocks.

"Where am I, and what is the meaning of this outrage?" said the captive, not appearing to hear the remark addressed to him, as he still continued standing.

"You are in the power of Barboni," replied Florio.

"I didn't ask you what the hour was," answered the captive, festively.

Bigamini appeared in the doorway, and making a sign to Florio, remarked:

"The gentleman must be deaf."

"Per Baccho!" cried Florio. "His ears are big enough."

"What is that?" said the prisoner. "Did you speak of death. You will not take my life?"

"Confound the fool!" replied Florio; "he's more trouble than he is worth. Have they gone for the captain?"

"Yes," answered Bigamini; "we shall have him

here soon with Lieutenant Hunstoni and his friend Darrelli."

"Ah!" exclaimed Florio, "they are two splendid brigands, Hunstoni and Darrelli. They fear nothing. They can flay and torture, and never shudder at the groans of the victims."

"Why should they?"

"Oh, I scarcely know, but I have a soft heart, especially for women."

"And I haven't," said Bigamini. "I wish my old woman would come over here and fall into Barboni's hands. I could see her roasted at the stake! She drove me to be a miserable Bigamini."

The prisoner moved uneasily.

"Kind gentlemen," he said, "I am nothing more than a tradesman of Naples. Take what I have and let me go."

"You'll know your lot soon," answered Florio, carelessly.

"What! be shot soon?" repeated the prisoner.

"You deaf old fool, I didn't say that."

"Pardon me, I'm a little deaf. You must speak loudly if you want me to understand you. Every one in Naples knows that Andrea Parazzi has been deaf since the last eruption of Mount Vesuvius."

"Hit him in the mouth if he won't be quiet," exclaimed Florio.

Bigamini took up a piece of wood, and struck the prisoner in the face, covering it with blood.

"That's a gentle hint," he said, laughing.

"A deep flush of anger overspread the face of the man who called himself Andrea Parazzi.

Fierce words seem to come unbidden to his lips, but he choked them back, and cast his eyes on the ground.

"Don't be afraid to look at me, old boy," continued Bigamini; "you're not likely to get out of this alive, so there is no fear of your identifying me."

The captive showed no sign of hearing this speech, though his heart beat quicker, and a heightened flush mantled his cheek.

In a short time three men entered, one being Barboni, whose face was bruised from the blows Jack had rained upon it.

The second was the lieutenant, Hunstoni, and the third was a man with a dark mustache, addressed as Darrelli.

They took three chairs which Florio placed for them at the table, and began to examine the prisoner, to whose capture great importance was evidently attached.

"Who have you here?" asked Barboni.

"He calls himself Andrea Parazzi, signor, a tradesman of Naples, whom our men captured an hour ago," replied Florio.

"And he's as deaf as a post," put in Bigamini.

"We will soon see about that," said Barboni, who, with his companions, had been evidently drinking far into the night.

The prisoner stepped forward in obedience to a sign from Florio.

"What ransom do you want?" he asked. "My friends will pay you handsomely."

"Ten thousand ducats," replied Barboni.

"What does he say? A thousand ducats; that will be paid," exclaimed the prisoner.

"Ten thousand," roared Florio.

The prisoner put his hand to his ear.

"I'm very deaf," he replied; speak louder."

"It is time to put an end to this farce," said Barboni. "Florio, do your duty!"

Florio, who was a strong, powerful man, threw himself upon the prisoner, and bore him roughly to the ground, causing him to become nearly insensible, as his head came in contact with the rocky floor.

Seizing him by the throat with one hand, he, with a sharp knife which he held in the other, cut off his ears, cropping him close to the head, as coolly as if he had been slicing a cucumber.

He then raised up the disfigured victim, and dragged him to the table.

"Steffano," said Barboni, "you are guilty of assuming a disguise, and you have purposely thrown yourself into our hands, in order that you might have an opportunity of describing and betraying us."

The wretched man fell on his knees before the three brigands.

"I confess—I confess!" he cried. "Spare my life, illustrious chief; for what I have done was by the orders of my superiors."

"You admit that you are Steffano?"

"Si, signor; as much as you are the terror of Naples, so much am I terror of evil doers in the city."

"You are not deaf, neither are you a tradesman."

"No; pardon the deception."

"You see that I know all things," said Barboni, calmly. "But do you not deserve death for trying to spy upon and betray me?"

"Alas! yes, signor. I should despair of my life did I not know that you were as generous as you are brave."

Turning to his lieutenant, the brigand chief said:

"Can we afford to spare this man's life?"

"No," said Hunstoni, decisively.

"Yet I should like to send him back with his ears cropped, as a defiance to Sforza."

"You forgot one thing," said the man with the dark mustache.

"What is that, Darrelli?"

"He has seen us without our masks!"

"True," replied Barboni; for the moment I had forgotten that. He must die."

At these words, Steffano, the unlucky police agent, prostrated himself at the feet of his judges.

"Spare my life, signor," he cried, piteously. "Not a word shall ever pass my lips—on my honor, I swear."

"What!" said Barboni, "the honor of a police agent, a spy."

"Hear me, for the love of God!"

"Hear me first," replied Barboni. "Was not your intention in coming here to drag us all to the scaffold?"

Steffano made no answer.

"You sought our lives and had no remorse. What's

the life of a rascally police agent to us?" cried Darrelli.

"Nothing at all," said Hunstoni. "Waste no time with him. Florio, kill him, at once!"

The brigand looked at Barboni to see if he wished this command to be carried out.

"Stay!" exclaimed Barboni; "let Bigamini kill him. I never saw the little traitor let blood."

"I—I don't like the look of it," signor, replied Bigamini, shrinking back.

The police spy groveled on the ground in the most abject manner.

He besought, he swore, he cried, raved and cajoled in a manner piteous to behold, while the blood streamed from his wounds, and his bloodshot eyes almost started from their sockets.

"Oh, signor!" he exclaimed, "for the sake of the Holy Virgin, spare me. Santa Maria! you must not let me die thus. I must see a priest. Curses on you! Oh, Santissima Virgine, will you allow this?"

"Silence the bleating fool," said Hunstoni. "Have you no dagger, Bigamini?"

"Ye-es, signor," replied Bigamini, fumbling in his waistcoat, and at length producing a dagger. "But I don't like the look of it."

"Make haste. You have shed blood before."

"Spare me, mighty signor," said the writhing victim. "Your time may come, and you may have to plead for mercy."

"When it does come, I shall know how to die," answered Barboni, folding his arms proudly and sternly.

Bigamini sank on one knee, and, with a dexterous stroke, plunged the dagger into the heart of the defenseless police agent. Steffano gave one convulsive movement, and all was over.

"Cut off his head," said Barboni.

This was done, and Bigamini, after considerable hacking, held up the ghastly trophy.

Barboni called for a hammer and some nails, with which he fastened the ears on the top of the head.

Gazing for a moment at the hideous spectacle, the convulsed features, the starting eyes and the falling jaw, he turned to Bigamini.

"You will take that to Sforza, the chief of the police of the city of Naples," he said.

"Si, 'celenza," replied the spy.

"It will be a warning to him how he tries to catch us napping again."

"Have you any further commands, signor?" asked Bigamini.

"No; depart at once, and report yourself again in three days."

Bigamini bowed, and taking up the head all gory as it was, carried it away.

The next day, Sforza, the chief of the police, found a parcel on the table in his private office.

On unwrapping it, he started back with horror on beholding the mutilated head of his faithful Steffano.

Pasted on the forehead was a piece of paper.

On this was scrawled the single word:

"Barboni."

Some one had entered his office in the night and presented him with the dreadful gift.

"Santa Maria!" he said. "This is not a man; he is a fiend."

Again Naples was thrilled with horror as the story circulated, and many prayed to the Virgin that they might not fall into the power of Barboni, the brigand.

CHAPTER V.

THE VISIT TO CASTEL INFERNO.

JACK was not deterred from his purpose of going in search of the brigands.

Many men would have given up the chase, after the shocking fate of the police agent.

But he had confidence in himself, and knew no fear.

Bigamini was his guide, and led him to the Volturmo, which they crossed, attended by the soldiers.

At length they descried a castle, which Bigamini declared was, to the best of his belief, the one in which he had been confined by the brigands until his escape.

Inquiring whose it was of some peasants, they replied to Jack that the Prince of Villanova lived there.

It was the famous Castel Inferno, reputed to be haunted.

Many dreadful murders had occurred here years ago, and its history was as sad and bloody as could well be imagined.

Jack approached the castle.

The drawbridge was down, and he walked boldly into the courtyard.

Jack was intensely surprised when he found himself fairly within the castle.

There were no ferocious-looking armed brigands; in fact, nothing whatever to indicate that it was the abode of a savage bandit.

Only an old man was visible, and he, in reply to our hero's question, said that the prince was absent, but no doubt the steward would attend to the signor.

Asking for the prince, the answer was that he had been at Rome for three weeks, and would not be home for four days.

The steward invited him to enter and take refreshments, which Jack refused to do, saying he would call again.

He returned to Naples and waited patiently for a week, when he again visited Castel Inferno.

The same absence of precautions against surprise struck him, and leaving his soldiers outside, he prepared to cross the drawbridge as before.

"Let me stop here, signor," said Bigamini; "I may be in danger. You know I am nobody, and they would not hesitate to kill me."

"It does not look such a ferocious place," answered Jack, regarding the goats running about in the yard and the pigeons feeding peacefully with the fowls.

Bigamini's teeth began to chatter.

You should never go by appearance," he said.

"Are you sure you have not made a mistake?" asked Jack.

"I can't be quite sure; it was dark when I ran away. Let me stay here, sir; I daren't come in with you."

"If you are such a coward, remain with the soldiers," replied Jack, in great disgust.

"Thank you, sir," returned Bigamini, with relief. "Once, when I was a happy Smiffins, I shouldn't have minded, but now—"

Jack did not stay to hear him.

He stalked across the drawbridge and through the courtyard as before.

An aged servant, patting the neck of a pet lamb, looked up.

"Is the prince at home?" Jack asked.

"Si, signor; you will find him inside. Do not be afraid to enter. His highness lives so plainly and simply that we have few servants, and he dispenses with all state."

Jack wondered more than ever at this.

But seeing there was no one to guide him, he entered the house and looked into several rooms, all plainly furnished and empty.

At length he pushed open the door of a library, and beheld the prince seated in a chair, engaged in reading a volume of Tasso.

"Not much like a brigand," thought Jack.

His entrance aroused the prince, who instantly arose.

"Ah! Mr. Harkaway, if I do not mistake," he exclaimed.

"Pray pardon me for intruding upon your privacy un-announced," said Jack, "but I could find no servants to introduce me."

The Prince Di Villanova smiled.

"That surprise you?" he said.

"I confess it does."

"My habits are so simple. I keep but three servants, and the poorest peasant on my estate has permission to approach me when he pleases. All can enter here."

"You are doubtless astonished to see me," said Jack, feeling rather puzzled how to proceed.

"No. You have come to ask me for an apology for shooting you in the shoulder; you shall have it."

This was frank, and Jack could not but accept it.

He now saw the prince face to face, and the other day he had seen and fought with the brigand outside the sybil's cave.

But Barboni was fierce and truculent in his expression while the prince was soft and mild, with a long beard, like a sage who is fond of peace books and retirement.

"You will admit that you provoked me," continued the prince; "your expressions were not complimentary. You called me a brigand—ha—ha! I a brigand! It is very amusing."

"You insulted my wife," said Jack, "and—"

"Tut, tut! Pazzi amico mio," interrupted the prince. "Your English ladies do not understand the high-flown compliments of us Neapolitans. Let it all be forgotten. You will take some refreshment?"

Jack thought of wine poisoned and drugged, and respectfully declined.

"Come, you are my guest," continued the prince, "I will show you a lovely view of the valley of the Volturmo from my terrace."

He leaned gently on Jack's arm and led him through an open window terrace.

The first thing his eyes fell upon was the soldiers gathered together in a little knot outside the moat.

"What," he cried, with a laugh. "Have you brought with you an escort of soldiers? Mr. Harkaway, I thought you were a brave man."

Jack began to feel ashamed of himself.

How could he have mistrusted this amiable personage, who was so simple and inoffensive?

"You must have the goodness, prince, to excuse me," said Jack. "I have heard about—about brigands."

"And you thought I was connected with them, eh?"

"I did."

"You see how absurd the idea is. Why should I, a man of ample means and simple tastes, associate myself with such miscreants?"

Jack did not know.

"I shall go away with different ideas," he answered.

"If you will do me justice, I shall be satisfied," said the prince. "That I am a man of violent passions when insulted, I am willing to admit."

"You have heard of Barboni?" asked Jack.

"Who has not?"

"What do you think of him?"

"Simply that he is a desperate ruffian, best avoided."

"I have sworn to kill him or hand him over to justice," said Jack.

A peculiar smile crossed the handsome feature of the prince.

"A rash vow, which may recoil upon yourself, caro mio," he said. "Let the government do its own dirty work. Return to England and forget all about this brigand."

"Never!" said Jack, emphatically.

"Well," said the Prince Di Villanova, "you will do as you please. Pray come and see me again, Mr. Harkaway, if you will not stay now. Always make my poor house your own."

"Thank you," answered Jack.

"Now we are happily reconciled, and you have accepted my apology. I may expect no action on the authorities for the unlucky shot I sent at you in a moment of anger?"

"Certainly not."

"We shall meet as friends?"

"By all means," replied Jack, who could not quarrel with this man—"though I should like to have a shot at you in return."

The prince laughed loudly.

"You are like all your countrymen," he said. "But here we consider an insult as good as a shot or a stab. You insulted me by calling me a brigand; that was your shot."

"Well," replied Jack, good-naturedly, "I will look it in that way."

Perfectly confounded at the prince's treatment, taken off his guard, he found himself saying adieu in a friendly manner.

Villanova saw him outside the moat, shook his hand, thanked him for his visit, and pressed him to come again.

He told the soldiers to march on, and ordered Bigamini to precede him, as he wished to be alone and think.

His interview had been so different with the prince to what he had expected.

He had pictured himself entering a castle bristling with cannon and armed men; the prince himself in armor, perhaps, and he hurling defiance at him.

"I can't make it out," said Jack to himself; "I'm in a fog."

The soldiers and Bigamini were a quarter of a mile ahead, and their arms could be seen gleaming in the sun.

Cattle lowed in the meadows, the peasantry went on with their daily labor, and all seemed peace and contentment.

Suddenly he heard something running behind him.

Turning sharply, he saw a thin, ragged youth, who might have been eighteen or four-and twenty.

There was a meek, broken-spirited look about him which bespoke ill-treatment, and a vacant expression in the eyes which showed that the mind was not so strong as it might have been.

"Who are you?" asked Jack, sharply.

"Inglesi," was the reply.

"What is your name?"

"Luni, they call me. It's Lunatico in full. I'm not all right here."

The youth tapped his forehead.

"Well, Luni," said Jack, more kindly, "what do you want with me?"

"She sent me?"

"Who?"

"She of the vaults. Il Spirito—the spirit. I mustn't say any more, or they'll beat me," said Luni, with a start of affright.

Extending his hand, he held out a dirty strip of paper, on which something was written.

"She wrote it. Il Spirito wrote it, and told me to run after a signor, and I suppose it's meant for you."

Jack took the paper, and gave him a piece of money.

"What's this?" he asked, looking at it curiously.

"Money!"

"No use to Luni," said the youth, shaking his head sadly and handing it back.

Then, with a "Buon giorno, signor," he took to his heels, and darting into a thicket, was lost to sight.

Jack held the paper up to the light and with difficulty read what was scrawled on it in pencil.

"Believe nothing you have seen or heard in the castle. Above all things be on your guard. Your life and the lives of those dear to you are in danger. Villanova is—another time—interrupted."

This scrawl did not amount to much.

It said too little, and it was with a feeling of annoyance that Jack put it in his pocket.

Mystery was accumulating upon mystery.

"I wonder what this means?" thought Jack. "Hanges, if I don't feel like an old knight in a story book going to take an enchanted castle."

He walked on to the river, crossed over, mounted his horse, which was waiting for him, and left Bigamini to return with the soldiers, to whom he distributed some money, while he rode back to Naples.

On his arrival in the Strada Di Toledo he called for a council of war.

It was attended by Harvey, Tom Carden and the little coxswain, who were all anxious to know the result of his journey.

He told them exactly everything that had happened, and showed them the mysterious scrap of paper.

"Now, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "you are as wise as I am. What is your opinion?"

"It's all kid," replied the coxswain.

"Rank humbug," said Carden.

"What do you think Dick?" asked Jack.

"I was thinking," replied Harvey, "of the wolf who put on sheep's clothing. You know the fable."

"Bravo," said Tom Carden, "Harvey has hit it. Your prince has been trying to make a fool of you, Harkaway."

"He was quiet and civil enough," answered Jack.

"Yes, because you had soldiers, and did not go alone."

"What are we to do?"

"Do? Why, be as foxy as he is," said Carden.

"But," said Jack, "how are we to connect Prince Villanova with Barboni? The prince is polished and wears a beard. Barboni has very little hair, but is wild and savage."

"It's got to be done," replied Carden, in his dogged way.

"I have come to the conclusion," exclaimed Jack, "that the prince and Barboni are two different persons."

"Then we differ," remarked Harvey. "The mysterious scrap of paper ought to open your eyes."

"I've got a brilliant idea," said the little coxswain.

"What's that?" asked all.

"Let's capture the prince and hide him away somewhere, and torture him till he confesses."

Jack laughed.

"You've got to catch him first," he said. "The question is, who will tell the cat?"

Tom Carden nodded his head gravely.

"That's the best dodge I've heard of for a long time," he said. "It must be thought over."

Emily and Hilda here put their heads in at the door.

"Are you privy councilors coming to dinner?" said Emily.

"Shan't be ten minutes dressing, dear," replied Jack.

"We know what you are chatting about," remarked Hilda.

"You're very clever if you do," answered Harvey, "because we were discussing the best way of cooking macaroni, and whether it was good without cheese."

"Nonsense," replied Hilda, "you were talking about catching your brigands. We have been listening at the door."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Harvey, pretending to be angry.

Hilda went up and kissed him.

"Don't be cross, dearest," she said, coaxingly.

"Cross with you, darling?" he answered. "Not I. It was only fun."

At this moment there was a loud noise outside the door.

Bump—smash—bump—bump.

It was as if somebody's head was being knocked against the old oak paneling.

"What the deuce is that?" asked Jack, getting up.

"Somebody's tooth falling out," said Harvey, with a laugh.

Tom Carden arose and opened the door.

He disclosed to view Monday, who was struggling with some one.

"What's the row, Monday?" he said.

"It um rascal Bigamini, sare," answered Monday.

"Um thief always listening at um door. Um bump his head to teach him."

"Bigamini!" cried Jack. "Bring him in!"

The little man was dragged into the room, looking very crestfallen.

"How did you get back to Naples so soon?" asked Jack.

"I caught the mail cart and got a lift," replied Bigamini.

"What brought you here?"

"I come to see if you wanted me again, sir, and I wasn't listening. It's all his—but I suppose you won't believe me—once when I was a happy Smiffins, my word was good enough, but now I'm a miserable Bigamini."

"Go about your business, said Jack, shortly; "I shan't want you any more."

"Will you take me into your service, sir?"

"No. I have as many servants as I want. You've humbugged me about the brigand's castle somehow. Don't let me catch you on these premises again."

"That all comes of being a miserable Bigamini," whined the spy.

"Run him out, Monday."

"Yes, sare."

He pushed him toward the door again, employing his knee with rather more force than was pleasant.

"Never mind, Mr. Harkaway; I'll watch over you, sir," said Bigamini.

"You come out of this," replied Monday; "me teach you to listen at um door."

Bigamini was hurried ignominiously down the stairs, and thrust out into the street with a vigorous kick.

The little man shook himself and turned around savagely.

"I'll remember you for this, my dark beauty," he exclaimed, viciously.

"What um do?" asked Monday, with a derisive sneer.

"I'll have your ears."

"They used to say in Pisang, 'I'll have your head,'" he muttered. "It un new thing to say, 'I'll have your ears.'"

But there was something savage and bloodthirsty about Bigamini, which made Monday feel his ears affectionately, as if to see if they were safe.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS ARTIST.

THE more Jack thought over the question, how to catch the brigand chief, the more he became perplexed. He did not know how to begin.

Castel Inferno, the abode of Prince Villanova, did not look like a robber's stronghold, nor did the prince himself resemble a brigand.

Where was Barboni to be found?

Neither of the four friends could suggest any means of commencing the campaign.

It was one thing to fight a man you can see, but to search for a hidden enemy was a totally different matter.

After dinner on the day of Bigamini's expulsion by Monday, he was thoughtful and preoccupied.

He had scarcely eaten anything.

Emily observed this with alarm, and tried to cheer him up, but without success.

The little coxswain dropped in with Carden, and proposed a four-handed game at billiards, but Jack was not in the humor for games.

"I wish," said Emily, "you would go home, Jack. Something dreadful will happen, I'm sure, if we stay here much longer."

"I can't help being quiet sometimes, my dear," replied Jack.

"Yes; but you are always grave, now. I know what you are thinking of; it is that dreadful brigand chief."

"They are all thinking of the same person," said Hilda. "Dick has been a different man lately."

Harvey tried to laugh.

"And Mr. Carden and Mr. Campbell are quite changed," continued Hilda; "they talk in whispers, and shut themselves up in a room to hold councils of war, as they call it."

Jack frowned, as if he did not like the turn the conversation was taking.

"I shall out for a stroll, I think," he said, getting up and stretching himself.

"Don't go out, dear," said Emily.

"Why not?"

"I don't want you to."

"But why? I like a reason for everything," he persisted.

"You may think me very foolish, but I feel as if something would happen to-night, if you left me."

"Nonsense," said Jack, lighting a cigar.

He went to a side-table and took up his hat and a small stick which he carried.

"Don't go, Jack—don't go, to oblige me," cried Emily.

"Very sorry," he answered, "but I like to have a will of my own sometimes; I shan't be long."

Emily sighed deeply, and resumed her seat.

She knew it was no use urging Jack further, if he had made up his mind to do a particular thing.

"Going up to her, he kissed her forehead, saying:

"You stupid little pet, what are you afraid of—shadows?"

Emily shuddered.

"Something more substantial than shadows—brigands," she replied.

He laughed and exclaimed:

"Walter, will you go with me?"

The coxswain quickly responded in the affirmative, in spite of a cross look Emily gave him.

"You must not be angry with me, Mrs. Harkaway," said Campbell; "it is not I who takes your husband out; he takes me."

Emily made no answer.

The two friends went away together, and enjoyed the fresh evening air, the night being the most delightful part of the day in Naples, for it is then that the fierce heat of the sun passes away as the cool breeze of the sea sweeps over the shore.

They wandered up the Strada Di Toledo, and entered the Corso, which had a fair sprinkling of people, who were taking the air.

By chance, a girl, neatly but poorly dressed, though of ladylike appearance, pushed up against Jack, and something she carried under her arm fell on the pavement.

"Oh!" she cried, "my new picture. What shall I do? It was scarcely dry."

The little coxswain stooped down and politely picked up the picture, which was a portrait in oils.

Unfortunately the dust had stuck to the fresh varnish, it having fallen on its face.

"Dear me, how troublesome," continued the girl. "I shall have to take it home and touch it up again, when I had expected to have received the money for it."

"Don't let that worry you," exclaimed Jack. "It was confoundedly clumsy of me to knock it from under your arm. I will buy it. What's the price?"

"It is not for sale," replied the artist. "I'm a portrait painter, signor, and this was ordered by a lady who is impatient to receive it."

"Never mind," said Jack. "You shall paint me, and I shall give you some money on account."

"And mine too," replied the little coxswain.

He turned to Jack and whispered:

"I never saw such a pretty girl in my life. Isn't she a beauty? Look at her dark glossy hair and sparkling black eyes."

"Thank you very much," said the girl. "My name is Bianca, and I live at the first house in the Strada D'Italia, which runs out of the Corso. I am nearly always at home. Good-night."

"Will you have some money now?" said the little coxswain.

"Signor," exclaimed the Italian girl, drawing herself up proudly.

"I—I beg your pardon. I—"

"It is my custom only to receive money when I have earned it," she replied.

"But we have spoiled your picture."

"I ought to have taken more care of it."

"May we come and see you," asked the little coxswain.

"Any person who wishes to employ me as an artist will always be welcome. Good-night once more."

"You said the first house in the Strada D'It—"

The little woman with the black hair and dark eyes had vanished.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Walter, "she's gone."

"Don't cry," said Jack, smiling.

"I can't cry because I have nothing to sell," answered the little coxswain.

"Tell you what I'll do," said Jack; "there is a cafe open on the Corso; I'll fly you for two drinks."

"No, you won't," replied Walter; "you will come with me to the first house in the Strada D'Italia."

"What for?"

"What for?"

"I want to be carved and gilded—portrait painted you know. Have my phiz done in oils on canvas and set in a gold frame."

"What rot!"

"It isn't rot. Come with me. You have nothing to do, and it will be a diversion from thinking of brigands."

"I want to get back to Emily. She seemed so cross at my going out. Poor little thing! it does not take much to break her heart."

"You will come with me, I tell you," continued the little coxswain.

At this moment a thin, shuffling figure passed them, and looking in their faces, turned back.

"I hope you'll excuse a miserable Bigamini, sir," he said, addressing Jack.

"What!" exclaimed Jack; "is it you?"

"Yes, sir; and what may your little game be—as I used to say when I was a happy Smiffins—if I may make so bold?"

"Stagging," replied the little coxswain.

"What, sir?"

"The fact is," said Jack, "my friend has taken an interest in a little Neapolitan girl who paints portraits."

"Paints portraits? Yes, sir; go on."

"And lives in the Strada D'Italia," replied Jack.

"First house around the corner," put in the little coxswain.

"First house around the corner? Yes, sir; go on," repeated Bigamini.

"And has glossy black hair and dark eyes," said the coxswain.

"Glossy black hair and dark eyes," said Bigamini, with his accustomed chuckle.

"Do you know her?" asked Walter.

"Don't I? Ha—ha! That is funny. Excuse me, gentlemen—I should say signors."

"Well, what do you know of her? Nothing bad, I'll bet," said the little coxswain, angrily.

"Don't you put up your feathers, sir. You're for all the world like a little bantam cock," said Bigamini.

The little coxswain let out strongly with his left.

Bigamini rolled over in the gutter, and lay there groaning.

"Don't call me bantam or any other cocks," said Walter. "I don't allow such familiarity."

Jack had to pick him up.

"There was once a spirit in the heart of Smiffins," he said, shaking himself, "which would have washed out an insult in ber-lood."

Walter laughed heartily at his tragic manner.

"But," he added, "a time will come. No matter."

"Come," said the coxswain, "what do you know about Signora Bianca?"

"She's a hartist," said Bigamini, sulkily.

"That's stale news."

"She lives in the house where I lodge."

"Is she square?" asked the coxswain. "I mean could we go and get our portraits painted?"

"You couldn't get a cleverer hartist, as far as that goes," answered Bigamini.

"Why couldn't you have told us all that before, you old pumkin?" said the coxswain.

"You need not have punched me half silly to get it out of me."

"You'll be all right presently. There is a ducat for you to go and get something to drink. Slope!"

Bigamini took the coin, mumbled his thanks, and pretended to go away, but he carefully watched the young men.

He saw them walk along the Corso, until they came to the Strada D'Italia.

They entered the corner house, and were evidently going to pay the artist a visit.

"Booked," he muttered. "I must lose no time in seeing the chief. Bianca played her part well, and I didn't work it badly though I wish these university men weren't so jolly handy with their fists."

He set off at his best pace for the palazzo of the Contessa Di Malafedi.

Her ladyship had been obliged to walk all the weary way home from the grotto of the sybil, when Jack took her carriage for Emily.

Enraged as she was at this insult, she did not make any complaint, for she knew that her conduct in taking Emily to the cave where the brigand met her had laid her open to suspicion.

She feared also that the police might watch her movements, and hang about her house.

To avoid this she called upon the chief of the police the next day, and made him a very handsome present of diamonds worth several thousand pounds.

Such was the corruption among high officials in Naples that if she had committed a crime, this act would have shut the eyes of the authorities.

Bigamini passed freely in and out of the contessa's palace.

The domestics all knew him, and regarded him as a privileged person, high in the favor of their mistress.

In a delightful little boudoir, furnished in the first style of old Parisian elegance, he found the contessa with the chief of the brigands.

"Well," cried Barboni, "has the fish swallowed the bait?"

"Yes," replied Bigamina, with a grin; "hook and all. He only wants landing."

"Where is he now?"

"At the apartments I have taken for Bianca, and she will keep him in play till your arrival."

"Good!" exclaimed Barboni. "Go to Mrs. Harkaway, and bring her into the strada."

Bigamini scratched his head.

"That's easier said than done," he replied.

"What!" cried Barboni, fiercely. "Am I to have my commands questioned! What value do you set on your life?"

Bigamini ran from the room with a startled air.

He had a salutary dread of Monday; but of the two, he feared the blood-thirsty Barboni most.

"The black villain," he said to himself, "will make his shoemaker acquainted with my tailor again if I don't watch it. But I shall be an out-and-out duffer if I can't get in without his seeing me."

The distance from one house to the other, was not far, and he soon traversed it.

On the ground floor of the house was a little conservatory, in which Emily spent much of her time.

It was her delight to attend to flowers in the cool of the evening, water them, pick off the dead bloom and leaves, and inhale their delicious fragrance.

Perhaps the spy remarked this habit of hers during one of his visits.

At all events, he crept through a side door with a noiseless step, and glided at once to the conservatory without being seen.

"Good again," he murmured. "I've sold that jolly old black cove. Who says I can't do it?"

As Emily's eyes fell upon the grotesque figure of the little London tailor, she was inclined to cry out.

"Don't scream, mum," cried Bigamini. "It's only me. You know me, mum—Mr. Harkaway's friend, mum."

"Oh, yes," replied Emily; "I know you now. What do you want?"

"There's a gentleman outside, mum. I don't remember to have seen him before, though I may have, for all those furriner chaps is very much alike."

"What does he want?"

"He gave me a ducat, mum—here it is—to tell you that he had a message for you, either about Mr. Harkaway, or from him, I can't remember which."

"Who is he?" asked Emily.

She was always agitated when Jack was out, and anybody came to tell her anything about him.

"Now I'm beat," replied Bigamini. "How can I tell you who he is, when he's a stranger?"

"I forgot that. Go on."

"He just wants you to slip your mantle or shawl over your head, mum, and come out and have two words with him."

"Why can't he come in here?"

"That's what I asked him, mum," said Bigamini, "but he shook his head, and said it did not much matter to him whether you came or not, though—"

"What?" ejaculated Emily.

"Though it might make a deal of difference to Mr. Harkaway, he said, mum, for people do take other's lives very suddenly in this country."

"That is a threat," said Emily, "but it seems that everybody and everything in this city is surrounded by intrigue and mystery. No one can do anything in a straightforward manner."

"You'd best go, mum, I think," said Bigamini. "It's only just outside in the street."

"Just outside?" repeated Emily, abstractedly.

"You wasn't to say a word to anybody."

"More mystery."

"Well, mum, no harm can come of it. The streets full of people, and the stranger will be close to the first lap."

"Are you sure the stranger said that I should do my husband good by going?"

"Certain sure, mum."

"I will go. There is nothing I would not risk for Jack's sake. He may be in danger."

"Ah, mum," said Bigamini, "if my first wife had only spoken like that, I might yet have been a happy diffina."

He wiped away a tear, real or imaginary, which he supposed had gathered in the corner of his left eye.

"Now," he added, "I am left all alone, to be a miserable Bigamini."

Emily paid no further attention to him.

She gathered a lace shawl she wore over her shoulders into a fold, and put it over her head.

Then she quitted the conservatory, apparently regardless of the little man's presence.

"That's all right," said he. "I'm getting quite a swell at dodges. My first wife used to say I wasn't worth my salt. But I'm wiring in strong, and getting my name up!"

"The chief ought to part a lump of money for this wheeze."

It occurred to him, in the midst of this jubilation, that it was not safe for him to remain there.

Accordingly he retreated, performing what the French in the late war called a "strategical movement."

As he went through the passage, he passed an open door leading to what in England is the butler's pantry.

This was Monday's headquarters.

An easy chair invited repose.

Bottles of all sorts, sizes and descriptions stood on the shelves.

There was no one in the little room, and Bigamini felt thirsty.

It was a frequent complaint of his.

He looked at the paradise, and the sight of the bottles, together with a crystal vase full of ice, was more than he could withstand.

He yielded to the temptation.

"The black beasts' out," he said. "I'll go in and lush myself up on the cheap."

Filling a tumbler with wine and ice, he threw himself in the armchair and sipped the pleasing mixture.

"That black brute hasn't got a bad breath. I wish it was mine," he muttered.

A box of cigars was placed invitingly at his elbow, and he lighted one, a genuine Partaga.

"Come," he said, "this isn't half bad. I rather like this crib. Wonder where the black demon is."

The thought of Monday gave him a cold shiver which necessitated another tumbler of wine.

Bigamini's head wasn't very strong, and the wine soon mounted into it.

He nearly forgot all about Monday, and crossing his legs began to sing a song.

"Blow the black," he exclaimed, as the thought of Monday once more intruded itself into his mind. "I mean to have a jolly. Strike up, governor; fiddle up—that's your sort."

At this moment Hilda began to play on the harp in the drawing-room.

The door was open, and the sound penetrated to Bigamini, who thought that some nigger minstrels had responded to his call.

"That's stunning," he said. "Now for a song. Nice sort of a crib, this. Here goes:

"Massa's gone to sea—oh, golly!

No one here but me—be jolly.

I'll laugh and sing,

And have my fling.

And spend my time in folly."

Scarcely had he finished the last line of the stave, when a dark shadow filled the doorway.

"Massa's gone to sea—" began Bigamini, commencing the second verse.

His eye caught the dark shadow.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, breaking off suddenly.

The dark shadow advanced a step or two.

"Bless um eyes and limbs; him got the cheek ob um devil," exclaimed the shadow.

Bigamini's countenance fell.

He was still sober enough to recognize in the dark shadow his inveterate enemy, Monday.

where to get better. Sit down, old cock, and make your miserable life happy."

"You come out that, I tell you," was Monday's only reply."

Bigamini did not move, he swayed his head backward and forward to the sound of the music, and sipped his wine as before.

This was more than Monday could bear.

He rushed to Bigamini and dragged him off the chair, and a struggle ensued.

The little man clung on to chairs, tables, anything he could grasp with his fingers, and stuck to it with the tenacity of a cat.

When he was near the door, for Monday gradually dragged him from one standpoint to another, he desperately grasped an empty plate chest.

The key was in the lock, but it was not fastened, and the lid came up.

Bigamini struggled more fiercely than ever, for he did not like to leave such pleasant quarters, and resented Monday's attack upon him as a personal grievance of the liveliest kind.

With a clever twist of his leg, he caused the black to stumble.

Seeing his advantage, he threw himself upon him, and Monday, losing his balance, fell backwards.

The plate chest stood invitingly before him, and he dropped into it.

Only his legs stuck up in the air.

He was completely boxed up, and with a shout of triumph Bigamini gave the legs a push, shut down the lid, turned the key, and sat on the chest.

"Gone under," he exclaimed. "Hurrah! this child can do it. Why didn't he make himself jolly?"

"Massa's gone to sea—oh, golly!"

"I'll have some more grape juice. Never say die."

He resumed his old seat in the arm chair, filled himself another tumbler of the insidious Lachrymæ Christi, and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Now this is what I call spiff," he said, "awfully spiff; I've shunted the negro, and given him a body blow in the chest."

He laughed at his own wit, in his usual chuckling manner.

Just as he had finished his seventh tumbler, a fleecy cloud of muslin appeared, coming trippingly into the room, which was now growing rather dark in the twilight.

"Monday," exclaimed a gentle voice.

"No, my dear, it's Bigamini," answered the little tailor, "hoping I'm not intruding. You don't know me, I suppose, my dear?"

"Are you a friend of my husband, sir?" asked Ada, who was the person in the cloud of muslin.

"Oh, yes, great friends; like brothers we are. Sit down, my dear."

"Thank you, sir," answered Ada, "Mr. Matabella went out for a stroll. I expected him back before now."

"So did I, my dear."

A deep groan came from the chest.

"Oh, Lor!" exclaimed Ada, "whatever on earth was that?"

"Nothing, my dear," replied Bigamini. "Ain't you a little pet, eh?" he said chuckling her under the chin.

"Don't you do that again," replied Ada, indignantly.

"No offense, my dear," he replied; "my only weakness is a petticoat. If I had been firm in the matter of petticoats, I might still have been a happy Smiffins."

"If you are unhappy," said Ada, "I daresay it is your own fault."

"You don't know my history, my dear," replied the little man. "If you heard all, you would weep to see me a miserable Bigamini. You'd do more than that—you'd give me a—kiss."

"A kiss," repeated Ada, blushing.

"Yes, a kiss of sympathy."

Again the groaning noise came from the chest, this time more profound than before.

"Oh, that dreadful noise, there it is again," cried Ada in alarm; "I wish Matabella would come in."

"Touching this kiss of sympathy, my angel," said Bigamini.

"You must be intoxicated," replied Ada, "or you would never talk to me like this."

"I am—I am. You've hit the nail on the head—that's the tip. That's the correct card. I am tight, and I mean to have a kiss. Come on, old girl."

Ada looked at him inquiringly for a moment, and then retired to the doorway, feeling rather afraid of the little tailor.

The groans which proceeded from the chest became more frequent and louder.

There was also a scratching noise inside, suggestive of a colony of rats.

"There is somebody in the chest," she exclaimed, tremulously.

Bigamini tried to stagger towards her, but was too tipsy to be able to keep his balance, and he rolled up against the wall.

"It's or right, my dear," he said, "on'y the wind—cur's thing the wind."

But Ada wouldn't believe him.

She fell on her knees, and turning the key, unlocked the big chest just in time.

There was no air to be inhaled from the outside, and Monday was nearly suffocated.

A little time longer would have settled him altogether. As it was he could scarcely breathe, and gasped like a fish out of water.

The fresh air poured in, and Monday drank it up as it were in gulps.

"My poor, dear Mat," cried Ada. "How did this happen?"

"Gulp—gasp—gulp!" was all Monday could reply.

"What you can see in that black lump of humanity beats me hollow—hic!" exclaimed Bigamini.

He tried to reach her, and his legs gave way, and he could only crawl on his hands and knees.

"Doosid funny room, this—hic!" he continued. "Got

a slanting floor—hic—walls seem to go round."

Monday gradually revived, and, with a plunge, he got up.

"Ha, ha!" he said, with a hysterical laugh. "Man Bigamini shut um in chest, will he? Me see 'bout that!"

He got out of the box and stretched himself, feeling rather cramped by his long confinement in such an unpleasant position.

Paying no attention to him, Bigamini succeeded in crawling to Ada.

"I'll have that kiss if I die for it," he cried.

"Oh, Mat, help me," screamed Ada.

"Never mind him," replied Bigamini. "I don't want to hurt him, but if he comes near me, I'll muzzle him. Ain't you a duck? Kiss her own pet man, who loves her, a darling."

His amorous speeches were soon cut short by Monday, who fell upon him like a battering ram.

"Pancaked, by Jove!" exclaimed Bigamini, almost out of breath, as he lay flat on his stomach, with Monday on his back.

Monday kicked and hit him to his heart's content, scarcely leaving a spot in his body untouched.

"Here, I say, get up!" roared Bigamini. "This won't do. I say, turn it up. I don't want mangling. Drop it, Oh, Lord, he'll squash me flat!"

At last he contrived to wriggle from under his tormentor, and his beating having partially sobered him, he ran into the street, being helped along in his flight by the toe of Monday's boot, which made frequent acquaintance with his back.

"That teach you your book, sare," said Monday, whose hair bristled angrily. "You not come here again to drink um wine and kiss um wife while um husband in chest."

Bigamini turned round at a safe distance.

"I'll cock a snooks at him," he muttered.

Accordingly he put his finger to his nose and danced a war dance in token of derision.

"Yah, yah!" he cried. "Go home. Put your boots on, you black smeller. Who kissed your wife? Yah!"

Monday foamed at the mouth with rage, and he would have darted after Bigamini if his wife had not seized his arm and dragged him inside.

Bigamini meanwhile looked around for Barboni or Emily, but he could discover no trace of either of them.

He thought it advisable to make his way at once to the house in the Strada d'Italia.

Barboni might want him.

As we know, he was a spy in the pay of the brigand chief, and he could not afford to offend his master.

Though far from sober, he managed to walk tolerably straight, and did not cannon against more than one out of ten persons as he walked along.

"Cuss that wine," he said to himself; "I don't feel half up to Dick."

While he is making his way to the corner house we must return to Emily.

She had left Bigamini without saying a word to either Hilda, Harvey, or Tom Carden.

Consequently they remained in ignorance of her departure.

Before she had gone more than a dozen paces she was confronted by a tall man, whose face was partially shrouded by a slouched hat, and whose form was enveloped in the folds of a capacious cloak.

"I am he you seek," he said in a full, deep-chested voice.

Emily started, for she knew the tones.

She had heard them in the box at the San Carlo, and again in the grotto of the sybil.

"Barboni!" she cried in affright.

"The same. Do not fear. I am here simply to fulfill my promise," he said.

"Promise!" she repeated, while the blood seemed to curdle in her veins, such was her horror of this man.

"When last we met, the sybil showed you the form of your husband talking to another woman."

"She did; but it was a juggle."

"You thought so at that time, and I promised to show you the reality."

"That you will never be able to do."

"You said seeing was believing. To-night you shall see with your own eyes."

"To-night?"

"This instant—now I come to fulfill my promise. Hear me."

"I will."

"At this moment Mr. Harkaway is in sweet converse with a Neapolitan girl of rare beauty. They are fondling one another; their arms twine around each other, his around her waist, hers about his neck."

All the outraged nature of a woman arose up in Emily.

"What is your object in telling me this?" she asked.

"I have a regard for you, and wish you to return to England to your friends, where you will be happier than with such a man."

"Ha!" cried Emily, "you're afraid of Harkaway and his friends. You think if I went to England they would all follow me. No matter; I will accompany you to see this sight."

"If I show you what I have promised, will you believe?" said the brigand, gnashing his teeth.

"If! But I cannot think Jack false to me."

"Other wives have thought the same, and yet their husbands have slyly kissed other lips. But come; time presses."

"I will follow you," she said.

"Tis well," answered Barboni. "Fear nothing. The streets are crowded. I mean no harm."

He led the way fearlessly, and several cloaked forms seemed to glide after him on each side of the way, mingling with people, as if they were ordinary wayfarers.

If Emily had noticed them, she might have fancied they were bandits in disguise.

And such indeed they were.

Those sombre forms, silently treading the streets, and turning wherever Barboni turned, were the brigand's bodyguard.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRIGAND'S PROMISE.

"You come out that," exclaimed Monday, angrily.

"Not by no means," replied Bigamini, with a hiccup; "the governor sent me here on private business."

"Pack of lies!" said Monday. "You come to steal um drink."

"Not bad tippie," answered Bigamini. "But I know

Underneath their shrouding cloaks might have been seen cruel two-edged daggers, many chambered revolvers, the sharp-pointed stiletto, and the Venetian poniard, of glass, so that the handle may be snapped off at the mouth of the wound.

The shrill whistle which Barboni knew so well how to sound, and which would have puzzled the cleverest school-boy to imitate, would suffice to bring them all to his side.

No wonder he walked fearlessly when he knew how well he was guarded.

Besides, he had nothing to fear from Emily, who was thinking of the information he had given her.

Her heart was beating wildly, and her head was in a whirl.

One thing she was sure of, and that was, Barboni wanted her and Jack, with all his friends, out of Naples.

He feared them more than the police and the military forces which the general had under his command.

But that Jack was false she could not bring herself to believe.

She suspected some trick, and she was brave enough to expose it.

When the corner house in the Strada D'Italia was reached, the brigand halted.

So did the spectral forms which followed him, hiding in shaded spots and doorways, so as to be within call, though out of observation.

"We have arrived, signora," said Barboni.

"What am I to do?" asked Emily.

"On the ground floor of this house there is a room; the door is open, but the entry is protected by a screen. When I wave my hand, you will come behind this screen."

"I understand."

"Having seen all that I have promised you, come away silently, and join me again outside."

"Join you?" said Emily.

"Yes; you must not reproach your husband here. I have more to say to you."

"Very well. I will join you," she answered.

Barboni stole noiselessly along the passage, and she saw him enter a room, the door of which stood open.

The seconds passed very slowly.

Each second seemed to her tortured mind a minute, and she waited impatiently for the signal.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE STUDIO.

We left Jack and the little coxswain going into the house in which the artist said she lived.

The fact was that Walter Campbell had overruled Jack's objections, and prevailed upon him to give Bianca an order to paint his portrait.

"I've got quite spooney all in a minute on that little woman," said Walter.

"Better mind what you're about," replied Jack.

"Why?"

"She may have a sweetheart, and these Neapolitans are ugly beggars to rile. They think nothing of sticking a knife under the fifth rib."

"I'll chance that," answered Walter.

"It's all very well for you married fellows to be so stuck up, but I like a quiet spoon sometimes, and don't often get it."

"Well," replied Jack, "I'll humor you his once."

They entered the house, and experienced no difficulty in finding the artist's apartments, to which they were conducted by the portress.

The rooms consisted only of a bedchamber and a studio.

Into the latter they were ushered; and when they had passed a screen they saw Bianca sitting before her easel, brush in hand and palette before her.

Various pictures, finished and unfinished, were scattered about the room, with plaster of Paris casts and statues, all in a marvellous disorder.

Bianca looked up in surprise as she saw her visitors, and asked them in Italian what the object of their intrusion might be.

"You must speak to her, Jack," said the coxswain.

"I can't patter Italian."

"All right," replied Jack.

Turning to the fair artist, he added:

"My friend and myself, signora, are desirous of availing ourselves of your undoubted talent, and we shall esteem it a favor if you will paint our portraits."

"Oh, certainly," she replied. "Shall I make a sketch of you to-night?"

"If you please."

Bianca turned the lamp which stood on the table, so as to let it throw all its light upon Jack's face.

"How do you want to be taken?" she asked.

"Here's a photograph of my wife," he answered, showing her one he happened to have in his pocket.

"Do you want to be painted together?"

"Yes."

"A pretty face," said the artist, contemplating the portrait.

"My wife is considered a beauty in England," said Jack, proudly.

"And in Naples, too, I should think. We cannot boast of those blue eyes and that fair hair here."

"If you will kindly stand up," said Jack, "I will show the attitude I should like."

"With pleasure."

Bianca arose smilingly and approached Jack.

The little coxswain never removed his eyes from her face.

He was badly hit in that quarter.

"Look here," continued Jack: "put your arm around my shoulder, and I will put mine around your waist; if you will allow me."

She obeyed his instructions.

"So?" she asked.

"That will do. Look up in my face."

"Like that?"

"Capital? You are supposed to be my wife, you know, and you look up lovingly. I gaze down upon you in the same way."

"I see," replied Bianca, showing her pearly teeth.

"Do you think you can do it?"

"Certainly I can."

At this moment the little coxswain started.

"There is some one behind the screen," he said.

The next minute he had dashed towards it and pulled it down.

To his astonishment he saw Emily.

"Mrs. Harkaway!" he exclaimed.

Jack looked dumfounded.

"My wife!" he cried. "Why, my darling, what in the name of wonder brought you here?"

Bianca still kept her arm on Jack's shoulder.

"You can remove your arm, now, signora," said Emily, quietly. "Your part is played."

"What does this mean, Emmy?" asked Jack.

"I have heard all," replied Emily. "Perhaps I arrived sooner than I was expected, and you would have known nothing about my visit had not Mr. Campbell pulled the screen down."

"Do explain."

"I was brought here to witness your infidelity, Jack, dear."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true. I was to see you making love to another woman; but I heard all that passed between you—at least, all that was important."

"But this lady is an artist," said Jack, pointing to Bianca.

"She is an accomplice," replied Emily, giving her a searching look.

"Of whom?"

"Barboni."

Jack and the little coxswain started.

"Did he bring you here?" demanded Jack.

"Yes. I will explain all presently. He is waiting for me now."

"What for?"

"To conduct me home again," she answered.

Bianca quietly returned to her chair, and toyed with her palette and brush.

"Confound it!" cried Jack. "Barboni so near, and I am unarmed. Have you a pistol, Walter?"

"Not even a pocket-knife," replied the little coxswain, in despair. "But—"

"What?"

"We've got our fists, and can man him a bit."

"No good. He would not venture into Naples alone and unarmed. Curse the luck."

Emily turned to the signora with a low bow.

"You have played your part well," she exclaimed.

"The portrait my husband wanted will not be required. Good-evening."

Bianca simply lowered her head.

"Come along," said Jack. "Let us get out of this. We may succeed in bringing the police down on the beggar yet."

Emily took his arm, and accompanied by the coxswain, they hastily quitted the studio.

As they went along, Emily explained how Bigamini had brought her word that a stranger wanted to see her.

She added that the stranger was Barboni, and that he tried to make her jealous.

Further, that she had accompanied him to the Strada D'Italia, but had gone behind the screen a little too soon.

Instead of feeling jealous, she was pleased to think that Jack thought so much of her as to wish to have her portrait painted in such a loving position.

"I can't exactly see his game," said Jack. "But it is very evident he wanted to disgust you with me."

"He wouldn't do that for nothing," remarked Walter Campbell.

"Not he."

"There he is," said Emily, pointing to a man within a few yards of them.

Jack looked straight ahead.

Yes; there was the brigand chief, calm and motionless, as if a price was not set on his head.

Many persons were passing to and fro in the busy Corso, though the side street was comparatively deserted.

"That's the cove; I twig him," said the little coxswain.

"Hi—hi—hi!" shouted Jack, at the top of his voice.

"Barboni—Barboni, the brigand!"

The people in the Corso stopped and looked strangely down the dark, dingy little street.

Had some one gone suddenly mad?

That was what they had thought at first.

"Go in a buster, Walter," continued Jack. "Back me up. Howl away a good un."

Joining their voices together they continued to shout—"Barboni—Barboni!"

Still the brigand chief did not move a step or appear to stir a muscle.

But all at once that terrible whistle was heard issuing from his lips.

It rose louder and louder.

It filled all the corners, and brought back an echo from the houses.

Silently, slowly, like ghosts coming from their graves at midnight, dark forms seemed to spring out of the earth.

They came from houses, from doorways, from corners, and even appeared to rise up out of the street, where, like lazarons, they had been lazily lying.

These men, fifty or more in number, glided toward the brigand.

Fearlessly they flung back their cloaks, and their arms glistened in the feeble, flickering rays of imperfect light.

It was a strange sight; like that of an opera.

Only music was wanted to make it resemble a set scene on a large stage.

A couple of police agents were attracted to the spot by the loud exclamations of Jack and the little coxswain.

The crowd, which increased every moment, followed them down the street from the Corso.

At this juncture the state of affairs became critical.

Barboni saw that something had happened to interfere with his plans.

His idea was that Emily had betrayed him to her husband.

It was necessary to retreat.

Speaking a few words to his followers in a low but self-possessed voice, he advanced quickly toward Jack.

His men followed him in a semi-circle.

Jack seized Emily by the arm and went into the middle of the street, still crying out very loudly:

"Barboni! Barboni!"

"Knock that noisy fool on the head," said the brigand. "But do not provoke a riot. We shall have the military upon us before we can get out of the city."

A dozen men ran toward Jack and the little coxswain. Emily began to scream, and her voice added to the clamor.

"To the wall, quick," exclaimed Jack.

They retreated to a doorway and placed Emily behind them.

Then, with their backs to her, they awaited the onset. They were not long kept in expectation.

On came the brigands with a rush, but there happened to be an old iron railing close by their side.

Jack seized a rail in strong grasp and tore it out of its bed.

He handed it to the little coxswain.

"Swipe away," he said, "keep them off. I'll soon have another."

Walter Campbell took the rail with both hands, and the foremost brigand fell with a broken skull.

The next shared the same fate.

By this time Jack was armed, and he laid about him with a will.

Several brigands went down before his sweeping strokes, and they could not reach him with the butts of their pistols or their daggers.

They were so enraged at seeing their companions fall, that some of the desperados fired.

Fortunately, in the half light, their aim was uncertain.

At the sound of the first shot, Barboni himself rushed up with the remainder of the brigands.

"No firing," he said, "you will kill the lady."

An unmistakable rush was made upon Jack and Campbell, who were pushed out of their position.

But they still fought valiantly.

At length a blow from a bandit stretched the little coxswain senseless on the ground.

"Help! help!" cried Jack. "Do you call yourselves men, and will you let us be murdered in the heart of Naples by brigands?"

The police agents and the crowd now come to the rescue, though in a half-hearted manner.

Barboni's name had frightened them.

Jack was dealing blows right and left.

But he was soon obliged to discontinue the conflict, because citizens and bandits became so mingled together that he did not know friend from foe.

Suddenly the brigands withdrew in a body down the street, carrying off their wounded with them.

At least a dozen men had fallen before Jack and the coxswain.

But each man was singled out and picked up.

The people did not seem to care to follow the brigands, nor did the police agents show any alacrity in the pursuit.

Jack's first thought was of Emily. He went to the spot where he had left her.

She was not to be seen. With a heart-broken cry he sank against the wall.

"Good God!" he said, in a moaning tone. "She is gone."

Rousing himself, he looked about in every direction, but could discover no sign of his beloved wife.

Emily was in the power of Barboni.

Walter Campbell was only stunned, and he quickly got on his legs, rubbing his head and looking about him.

"Jack," he said, "where are you?"

"Here," said Jack, pushing his way through the crowd.

"Gad, how pale you look!" said the coxswain. "Did you get a topper, like me?"

"Emily's gone," answered Jack.

"Gone?"

"Yes, the brigands have carried her off."

"By Jove, that's bad news, and I'd rather they'd have smashed me into bits than that should have happened; but cheer up, old fellow, we'll soon have her back again."

"I can't cheer up," said Jack, gloomily, and leaning upon his iron bar, a tear fell from his eye.

"What cures those fellows are," said Walter; "they might have done something."

"Not they," replied Jack. "Neapolitans won't help an English; they hate us too much. But for God's sake, let's do something."

"Do what?"

"Go after Emily. See the general, and get him to send out the soldiers; a troop of cavalry might hold the roads."

"Of course," said Walter. "Come on; buckle to."

They joined arms, and pushing their way through the stupid, gazing, chattering crowd, they gained the Corso.

Here they saw a carriage, jumped in, and were driven to General Cialdini's.

Jack was mad with rage and grief, but he did his best to keep calm.

Barboni had dealt him a terrible blow.

It was like losing his life to have Emily torn from him by such a miscreant.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE POWER OF BARBONI.

AS HARKAWAY had imagined, Emily had been seized by the brigands in the confusion.

A cloak was thrown over her head, which effectively smothered her cries.

Lifted up by strong arms, she was half-carried, half-dragged along.

At the end of the Strada a carriage with two horses was in waiting.

Lifting her into this, Barboni took a place by her side. Two men stood at the door awaiting instructions. They were the lieutenants of the band.

"You, Hunston," said the chief to one who had lost an arm, "will at once lead the men out of the city."

The man saluted in military fashion and fell back.

"To you, Darrelli," continued Barboni, "I assign the task of protecting and bringing up the rear. Retire across the country. Leave the wounded at the sybil's cave. The dead you must abandon."

Darrelli also saluted, and the carriage drove off at a rapid pace.

It was not until the last lamp of the city disappeared in the distance that the stifling cloak was removed from Emily's face.

She saw Barboni seated opposite her, regarding her respectfully, and smoking a cigarette.

"For heaven's sake, release me," said she, in a broken voice.

"That is impossible," replied Barboni, calmly.

"What do you mean to do with me?"

"Your treatment will depend upon circumstances. For the present it is enough for you to know that you are my prisoner."

"Jack will have a terrible revenge for this."

"He is at liberty to try."

"I have seen danger before," continued Emily, "and I have been a captive amongst cannibals and savages, from whom I received consideration and attention. May I hope for the same from you and your men?"

"I trust," replied Barboni, "that though we are brigands, you will find us gentlemen."

"That is all I ask."

"We are always weak and yielding when a lady is in the case."

"So long as my captivity does not subject me to insult and ill-usage, I can bear it; though if you want money I am sure you can obtain a heavy ransom for me."

"Money at present is not my object," he answered.

"You will not accept a ransom?"

"No."

The light of hope which had momentarily illumined her eyes, died out.

"I warned you," continued Barboni, "that by staying in Naples you and yours would incur danger. You would not go away, and you are reaping the consequences."

"I cannot help it," said Emily, with a sigh of resignation. "There is one in heaven mightier than you, and He will protect me."

Barboni bowed as if he was not prepared to enter into a discussion on this point.

Though not in good health, Emily behaved with a calm courage that was admirable.

She did not go into hysterics and beg wildly for mercy that she knew would not be shown her.

Her faith was in heaven.

Her trust was in her husband.

She felt confident that Jack would move heaven and earth, and leave no stones unturned to effect her release.

Barboni had told her that she should meet with respectful treatment, and she could expect no more.

At the river Volturno she alighted and crossed in a small boat.

Here an escort awaited her, and strongly guarded, she was conducted the remainder of the distance to the robber's cave on foot.

It was dark, and there was no necessity to blindfold her, as she could make no observations on the road.

At length the entrance to the cavern was reached, and she was conducted through winding galleries to a vaulted chamber, which was illuminated by an oil lamp, suspended by a chain from the ceiling.

It was roughly, but not uncomfortably furnished, being provided with a couch, table and chairs.

A doorway communicated with an inner room, which was fitted up with a bed, looking-glass, washstand and other things appertaining to a bedchamber.

This was also lighted up by an oil lamp, whose reflected rays showed that, like the sitting-room, the sandstone floor was destitute of a carpet.

"Signora," said the brigand, as he ushered her in, "these are your apartments. I regret they are not handsomer and larger."

"Thank you; they are better than I expected," she replied.

"You will be attended by a boy we call Luni. I shall not lock the door leading into the gallery, as you have no chance of escape, the outlets being guarded night and day by sentinels."

"If you give me an opportunity, I shall use my wings and fly away," said Emily, smiling for the first time.

The brigand's manner and treatment seemed to inspire her with happier thoughts.

"Breakfast, dinner and tea will be brought you by Luni," continued the chief. "And on that table you will find English books and papers to while away the time."

Again Emily expressed her thanks to him.

"Buon notte, signorita," said Barboni, raising his plumed hat respectfully. "I trust you will give us poor devils the praise of doing our best for our lady prisoners."

"Certainly, I have much to be grateful for," replied Emily.

The next moment she was alone.

Fatigued and exhausted by the stirring events of the evening, she drank some water that stood in a carafe on a shelf, and entering the second chamber, placed the washstand in the doorway as a barrier to impertinent intrusion.

Then, dressed as she was, she threw herself on the bed and soon fell into a fitful slumber.

She awoke early in the morning, it being half-past six by her watch, and went into her sitting-room.

The lamp seemed to have been trimmed, for it burned as brightly as ever.

She had not been long alone before the boy Luni entered, carrying a tray of breakfast things.

"I'm told off to wait on you," he said.

"Are you Luni?" asked Emily.

"That's what they call me, though she says I've got another."

"Who's she?"

"Why, don't you know? They're all afraid of her. Some says she's soft in her upper story like me. Anyhow, she does go on fearful if they knock her about."

"Does Barboni ill-treat her?" asked Emily, interested.

"Sometimes, though not often. When she's very bad, he has her shut up in the caves for weeks, and that tames her."

"Have you ever been shut up in the caves?"

"Yes, more than once."

"Where are they?" continued Emily.

"Under the—but I musn't talk too much, or else I shall get a beating," said the boy, breaking off in alarm.

"Do they beat you, poor child?"

"Oh, yes; everybody beats Luni. It's a kick here and a curse there."

"Why do you stay?"

"Stay. Where could I go to? Who'd have poor Luni? I've grown up here. They feed me, and I don't know anyone else; besides, I've got to like her."

"Come here, Luni; I want to talk to you," said Emily.

"But you musn't talk loud, else they'll hear," replied the lad, timidly.

"What is this woman like? Is she a lady?"

"What's a lady?"

"Why, a person well and neatly dressed, quiet in her manner, well educated, and all that."

"Her dress isn't much. They give her some stuff to make up at times, and she goes on dreadfully, I tell you, when she's put out," said Luni.

"Can I see her?"

"I daresay you will. She's always wandering about when she isn't shut up in the caves."

"Is she fond of you?"

"Yes, she kisses me and calls me her darling. No one else ever did that," replied Luni.

"Then she loves you. She must have a good heart. Bring her to see me, Luni, there's a good boy," replied Emily.

"I'll tell her. When will you have your breakfast?"

"Presently."

Luni went away, evidently fearful that he had stayed too long.

Emily was surprised to hear of this fellow captive, for she could be nothing else, and hoped, by seeing her, to get at some of the secrets of the brigand's stronghold.

That there was some terrible history attached to her, she did not doubt.

Perhaps she had been carried off from home and friends, and was forced to pine away in captivity, until reason itself tottered on its throne before the assaults of her brutal captor.

Luni proved an excellent attendant, and she obtained everything she asked for, from a pocket-handkerchief to a hairbrush and comb.

She did not fret much, for she had confidence in Jack. It will be recollected that Emily was always a jolly, plucky sort of girl, not given to fainting and crying.

She was like Jack in one respect—if she got into a scrape, through no fault of her own, she tried to get out of it again as soon and as well as possible.

It was one comfort to reflect that Jack must know that she was in the hands of the brigands.

Her disappearance was not mysterious.

After breakfast she took up a book, and throwing herself on the couch, began to read.

The light of the lamp fell upon the paper, and she read without difficulty.

She had not been long engaged in this manner when footsteps were heard, and a man appeared before her.

Emily looked at him, and almost hesitated to believe the evidence of her senses.

"Can it be you?" she exclaimed. "I thought you were dead or hiding somewhere."

"Perhaps you wished me dead, and as for hiding, what do you call being here?" was the reply.

"Well, you have astonished me," she said; "I should never have dreamed of meeting such an old enemy as Hunston in this place."

"It's a strange transformation," said the man, bitterly, "but so it is."

"Jack doesn't know this."

"He will sooner than he expects. In Hunston, the lieutenant of the brigand band, he will recognize Hunston, his old schoolfellow."

"How you have changed since those days, Hunston," said Emily.

Her mind went back to the time when she knew the boys as playmates at Pomona House.

"Who made me what I am?" cried Hunston, fiercely.

"Well?" she ejaculated, calmly.

"Your husband."

"I deny that!" said Emily, her eyes flashing.

"I tell you Harkaway made me what I am—a thief, a murderer, a brigand, a wretch flying from justice, for whom the scaffold awaits; a mutilated being, an outcast!"

"No—no," answered Emily, "you wrong him, indeed you do. Jack has always tried to be your friend."

Hunston laughed scornfully.

"What's the use of talking such bosh to me?" he exclaimed.

"It isn't bosh," persisted Emily. "Didn't he spare your life when he might have shot you, as you were crossing the stream at the place near the river?"

"His nerve failed him, I expect."

"No, it was his generosity of heart. He wouldn't take an advantage of an old friend."

"Pity he didn't; my career would have been ended

then, and I should have had something to thank him for."

Hunston sank into a chair, overcome by the vehemence of his feelings.

The sight of Emily made all his past life rise up in judgment, as it were, against him.

"Are you so miserable, then?" said Emily, kindly.

"I'm never happy when I'm sober," answered Hunston. Emily shuddered at this revelation.

It was indeed a confession of utter and complete heart-desolation and soul-deadness.

"How different your career might have been," she said.

"Might?"

Yes, if you had been a better man. You and I, Hunston, have known one another for a long time, have we not?"

Hunston growled assent.

"During the whole time have I ever known any good of you? Have you ever done a kind action or said a kind word to any one? Have you got a friend in the world?"

"No," he said fiercely.

"And your worst enemy is yourself."

"Don't madden me," he exclaimed. "It is too late to think of that now."

"It is never too late to mend."

"That is what the preaching fellows say. No; I shall die as I have lived—a villain."

Again Emily shuddered.

"But," she said, "you admit you are not happy. Why not leave these evil companions, quit this dangerous life, and retire to some quiet spot in Italy or Spain and work honestly for a living?"

"Harkaway has stopped that."

"How?"

"Didn't he shoot at me," said Hunston, "and make me lose my arm? How can a one-armed chap get a living?"

"It was your fault; you brought it on yourself."

"Did I?" said Hunston, with a sneer. "Wait till I get hold of Mr. Harkaway. I'll break both his arms, and see how he likes to go about with none at all."

"Keep your threats until you do meet him. Don't insult me," said Emily, boldly. "I won't say you are no gentleman, but you are not a man to say such things to a wife in the position I am."

"Forgive me," replied Hunston. "At times I believe I'm half mad, what with the drink and one thing or another."

"How did you come here?" she asked, wishing to turn the conversation.

"I escaped to Naples, and hearing of Barboni, the chief of the brigands, I resolved to join him."

"Do you like him?"

"I admire him; he's the cleverest and most unscrupulous scoundrel unhung."

"And that is a recommendation in your eyes?"

"Rather; he's a beauty in his way," said Hunston.

"What does he intend to do with me?" inquired Emily, hiding her anxiety under a calm exterior.

"He brought you here for me."

"For you?"

"Yes. You must know by this time that I love you."

Their eyes met.

His fell beneath her look of indignant scorn.

"And you must know by this time," she replied, "that if I do not hate you, I can only despise you and pity you."

"Perhaps you'll alter your mind some day," he said.

"Not I. You forget that I am a married woman now, and I would rather die than listen to any words I ought not to hear from you."

"You are in my power."

"So I have been before. You have carried me off more than once, and that sort of a thing becomes monotonous by repetition."

She laughed a little sarcastic, defiant laugh.

"This time will settle it," said Hunston, savagely. "It will be either marriage with me, or—"

He hesitated as if he did not like to pronounce the word.

"Well, go on," she said, calmly.

"Death."

"Very good, indeed," said Emily. "Quite melodramatic. You have not forgotten your old accomplishment of threatening a defenseless woman."

"I mean what I say."

"Possibly," she replied, with a look of indifference.

Another footstep was heard, and presently a second man entered the room.

But he approached with a polite bow, and an air of slight embarrassment.

Emily stared at him with more surprise than she had at Hunston.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" she exclaimed; "or is it—"

"Gus Darrel, at your service, Mrs. Harkaway," was the cool answer.

"More surprises," she exclaimed. "Here is my old enemy, Mr. Hunston, and now I see my old—may I say friend—Lord Darrell."

"By all means. I hope you will never have occasion to regard me as anything else."

Emily smiled upon him.

She saw the advantage of having a friend in Gus Darrel, because his influence would counteract the hostility of Hunston.

In her heart she was afraid of the latter.

During the interview, as far as it had gone, she had not displayed any fear.

But really she felt a great dread of this man, who was all he had described himself to be—drunkard, black-guard, thief, bandit, murderer.

"Will your lordship have the kindness to explain your presence on this changing scene?" she asked.

"With pleasure. You remember, of course, my unlucky blow which settled poor young Cockles?" he asked.

"It is fresh in my memory."

"Well, I could not stand trial in England, so I came

ever here by chance, and, meeting with Barboni, joined him."

"Why follow up one stupid act by another?"

"I was desperate, reckless, and did it for the fun of the thing."

"The descent of Avernus is easy," remarked Emily.

"But if I am to descend Mount Avernus in such delightful company as yours, Mrs. Harkaway, I shall not regret it."

"No?"

"Not in the least. But allow me to ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"What has become of Lily Cookies and her father?"

"Poor Lily," said Emily, feelingly; "her father died of grief at the death of his son."

"Is the old man dead?" said Lord Darrel, rather touched.

"He is. And Lily was so affected by the double loss of her father and brother, that she has been put in a lunatic asylum by her friends."

"Good heavens! And I am the cause of all this."

He covered his face for a moment with his hands.

"You have much to answer for, my lord," observed Emily.

"I have, indeed," he replied, looking up with a haggard expression.

"Did you ever really love Lily?"

"No. I admired her a little, but I always thought you in every way incomparably her superior."

Hunston jumped up angrily.

"Look here," he said; "if you want to snivel at what you have done, go outside and do it."

"It was only a passing emotion," replied Gus Darrel.

"I am not so hardened as you are."

"What business have you here at all?"

"Mrs. Harkaway is as much an acquaintance of mine as yours."

"I don't choose to have my fellows poaching upon my preserves," said Hunston.

"Then you must do the other thing; must he not Mrs. Harkaway?" replied Gus Darrel, laughingly.

"I am sure, my lord, I find you a more agreeable companion than Mr. Hunston," said Emily.

"I am much obliged to you for the compliment."

"Look here, Darrel," said Hunston, all the evil nature coming out of his eyes.

"Well?"

"I must have a word with you. Come outside."

"We shall meet presently, and then you can say what you like."

"No. Now—now!"

"Don't be a fool, my good fellow. I want to talk to Mrs. Harkaway," said Gus Darrel, in his obstinate manner.

"Signors Hunstoni and Darrelli," exclaimed Emily, "those are your new titles, I believe—don't quarrel."

"I have no wish to do anything of the sort," said Darrel. "I never do make a row before ladies. It is a bad form. Hunston ought to know better."

With a subdued growl, Hunston sank back again on his seat, and biting his nails, glared at each of them in turn.

"What do you want here at all?" he asked in a savage tone.

"I heard that the lovely captive we had taken was Mrs. Harkaway, and I thought I had as much right to pay my respects to her as you."

"I will ask the chief about that."

"You may ask what you like," replied Darrel; "I wanted to assure Mrs. Harkaway that she had one friend amongst us."

"I am sure of that, my lord," answered Emily, with one of her sweetest smiles.

She saw more than ever how important it was to conciliate Gus Darrel.

"Do you think you are more to Barboni than I am?" growled Hunston.

"Anyhow, we occupy the same position in the band."

"No, we don't."

"How do you make that out?"

"I'm first lieutenant and you are second," replied Hunston.

"That makes little difference. I have done as good service as you."

"So you say."

"Well, I take it a man with two arms is better than a fellow with only one."

"Do you taunt me with that?" cried Hunston, his eyes flashing fire.

"I only mention the fact; and I repeat that I hope Mrs. Harkaway will look upon me as a friend."

"I do, indeed, my lord," she replied.

"As for Harkaway, I have always had respect for him. He was a brother officer in my regiment, and though we snarled at times, I never thought him anything but a fine fellow."

"And I hate him," said Hunston.

"Possibly. There are some minds that can never rise above the dead level of hatred."

"Don't say too much," exclaimed Hunston.

"I have done. You know my sentiments; and if Mrs. Harkaway requires my protection or my services at any time, she can command them."

Emily's eyes danced with delight. She felt certain now that Darrel admired her beauty.

It was fortunate that it was so.

She could play off one against the other, and Darrel would be an effectual barrier against the persecution of Hunston.

Nothing could have happened better.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUARREL IN THE CAVE.

HUNSTON was now thoroughly aroused. He could see that Darrel meant to step between him and his plans. His idea was to revenge himself upon

Jack by carrying off his wife and making her his wife by force. Barboni had been very averse to this.

The brigand chief had sense enough to see that there was a great deal of danger in abducting Emily.

It would make the war between him and the four friends more bitter than ever.

But Hunston had been a good servant, and he claimed Emily as his reward.

He did not know that Darrel was acquainted with her. All he knew of his lordship was that he had killed his man in England, and was obliged to fly from justice.

There were men of nearly every nation who had enrolled themselves with Barboni.

Each had his history. It was a tale of crime.

Some offense, either murder, robbery, arson, or something disgraceful against the laws of their country.

"You seem to be very thin-skinned," said Hunston; "but it strikes me you are a murderer."

"I did kill a man by an unfortunate blow," replied Darrel, "and I'm sorry for it."

"That shows you're a sneak."

"Shall I tell you why I am sorry?" asked Darrel, quietly.

"Because your conscience smites you, as the Bible people say, I suppose."

"You're wrong," replied Darrel. "I am only sorry because it has brought me in contact with such a howling snob as you are."

Hunston sprang up and clenched his one fist.

"By Jove! if I had two hands I'd mark you for that," he cried.

"But you haven't, my lad," answered Gus Darrel.

"I've got a dagger, though, and that will let the daylight into you."

He drew a dagger from his waist belt, and rushed upon Darrel, who was unarmed.

With a scream, Emily threw herself between them.

She feared that Hunston would kill her friend and protector.

If Darrel loved her, she knew he was a gentleman and would not take any undue advantage of her, while Hunston was so unscrupulous that her virtue would be at his mercy.

"You shall not hurt him," she exclaimed, pushing back the dagger.

"Do you take his part? That seals his fate," replied Hunston, savagely.

He threw Emily roughly on one side, and again rushed upon Gus Darrel, who had taken up a chair to defend himself.

Emily piled scream upon scream, until the hollow cavern echoed with her voice.

Suddenly a tall form marched rapidly into the room.

With a sharp blow he drove Hunston back.

"Put up your dagger," he exclaimed; "I am master here."

It was Barboni.

Such was the extraordinary influence of this remarkable man over all with whom he came in contact, that Hunston, bully and blackguard as he was, shrank away, cowed and abashed.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, in English.

"Hunston wanted to knife me, or perform some other equally agreeable process on my person," replied Gus Darrel.

"I will have no fighting here," said Barboni. "Is the woman the cause?"

"Yes, she is," answered Hunston.

"Then I forbid either of you to enter these apartments again, without my express permission, on pain of death."

"You know what you promised me," said Hunston.

"Silence! Begone! I will talk to you elsewhere."

Hunston hesitated.

"What I do you dispute my commands?" roared the brigand. "By the heavens above us, if you linger another moment I will send a bullet through your heart, with as little compunction as I would shoot a dog."

Hunston half drew his dagger and glared fiercely at the bandit. He did not dare to disobey any longer.

He struck his dagger in his belt once more, and bestowing a vindictive look upon Darrel, strode from the cave.

Turning to Emily, Barboni said:

"Signora, I am deeply grieved to think you should have been annoyed in this manner."

"Don't mention it," replied Emily. "So long as blood is not shed, I do not care."

"You shall not be interrupted again, with my knowledge."

"Oh," said Emily, "I shall be pleased to see Lord Darrel at any time, and even Mr. Hunston, if they will not fight."

"Can you blame me?" asked Gus Darrel.

"No I don't."

"You are the Helen of this Trojan war; but I will keep Mr. Hunston quiet, never fear."

"Come with me Darrel," said Barboni. "We have business to transact together."

They bowed politely to Emily, and quitted her apartments.

Traversing the gallery they passed through the outer cave, which, as usual, was filled with brigands.

The men saluted their chief in a rough sort of fashion, but not with the heartiness that formerly characterized them.

They had suffered severely in the attack that Jack had made upon them after the ambush, and they had not forgotten the terrible onslaught of Jack and the little coxswain, in the Strada d' Italia, with the iron bars wrenched from the old railings.

Barboni, who was as sharp as a needle, saw that his popularity was waning amongst them.

Hurrying Darrel into the open air, he took his arm for a stroll through the forest glades.

"You must not have an open quarrel with Hunston."

"I don't want to," replied Darrel, "but I won't let a fellow like that ride over me."

"He is useful to me. The men have confidence in him

and what has happened lately has made them dissatisfied."

"I am sorry for that."

"What is this lady to you?" asked Barboni, turning sharply upon him.

"Nothing particular. I knew her in England, and I like her."

"Is that all?"

Again the searching glance seemed to read him like a book.

"Well, if it comes to that," replied Gus Darrel, "and the lady is to be sacrificed to any one, she shall be my wife sooner than Hunston's."

"I feared this," said Barboni.

"Why?"

"Hunston is unscrupulous and vindictive, though brave as a lion. Have you remarked that I have been very careful over your life?"

"In what way?"

"Whenever there has been any enterprise of danger on hand, I have sent Hunston in command, not you."

"I would have gone as readily," said Darrel.

"I know it. I am not impeaching your courage, but your life is precious to me," said Barboni.

"How is that? You never knew me before I came over here, and met you by chance in Naples, where you were beating up for recruits."

"Perhaps," said Barboni, "I know more about you than you imagine."

"Have we ever met before?"

"Yes."

"When?" demanded Darrel, in a tone of surprised curiosity.

"In your infancy. I can say no more; some day you may know all."

Barboni seemed affected in a strange manner, and his agitation was not lost upon Gus Darrel.

"I can't understand you," he remarked.

"It is impossible that I can explain further at present," replied the brigand; "all I can say is, that there was more than chance in our meeting—it was fate."

"What connection can there be between you, an Italian brigand, and me, Lord Darrel, a peer of England?"

"That is the mystery," answered Barboni, with a quiet but sad smile.

"Will you not explain it?"

"I have told you it is impossible. Let it be enough for you that I love you as if you were my—my own son."

The brigand's voice trembled as he spoke.

"Much obliged, I'm sure," said Darrel, twisting his mustache in his old supercilious manner.

"There must be no collision between you and Hunston," continued Barboni, recovering himself and speaking in his usual sharp, decisive way.

"Let him keep away from Mrs. Harkaway, then."

"I will manage that as well as I can. It is a pity that I brought her here, though I promised him that I would do so as a reward for his bravery."

"Indeed!"

"It appears that he hates Harkaway, and has been after the lady all his life."

"If he dares to touch a hair of her head," said Darrel, angrily, "he shall answer to me for it."

"Still you must not be provoked, and I can have no quarrel between you."

"Which do you like best?"

"You, my dear boy," replied Barboni. "I would sacrifice a thousand Hunstons for you, but—"

"What?" demanded Darrel, as the brigand paused.

"We are in danger. My exploits have lately stirred up the government against us. Harkaway and his friends have sworn to hunt us down."

"They have to do it yet."

"I'm not afraid, far from it," said Barboni; "yet, we must be watchful and united. We can afford no dissension in our camp."

"As far as I am concerned, there will be none," replied Gus Darrel.

"That's right. Meet Hunston in a friendly spirit, and let us go hand in hand to success."

They walked in silence under the leafy trees, listening to the humming of the insects under the influence of the morning sun.

"Will you tell me what you knew about me when I was very young?" asked Darrel, suddenly.

"Not now," replied the brigand, who seemed ill at ease.

"I have heard about my father's death," continued Darrel, whose brow was clouded, and lips contracted; "they all tried to keep it from me, but I know that he was murdered."

Barboni turned very white.

"My mother disappeared and I have some recollection of a foreigner, who was our steward, being mixed up in the affair," continued Gus Darrel.

"It was a sad affair," said Barboni speaking with difficulty; "I too have heard of it."

"What was it all?"

"My knowledge is very imperfect. Another time we will talk—not now. I have to go to the sybil's cave and see the wounded in last night's affray."

"Shall I go with you?"

"No. I go alone."

"Do you return soon?"

"To-morrow morning. To-night I shall astonish all Naples, and Barboni's name shall be in every mouth in Europe within the next twenty-four hours."

"That's right; never do a thing by halves," said Darrel, laughing.

"Promise me you will not provoke Hunston," said Barboni.

"I'll make no promise. If the fellow checks me, he will get a bit of my mind to a moral certainty."

"Then I must take him with me," said the brigand chief, after a moment's reflection. "Tell him, please, to follow me to the cave of the sybil with twenty-five picked men, all armed to the teeth."

"I wish you'd take me," said Darrel.

"Not this time."

"I'm getting quite rusty for want of a little excitement."

"You had some last night," replied Barboni.
 "Oh! that was nothing—a mere flea bite. You say you are going to astonish the world to-night, and I should like to be in it."

"No," replied Barboni, a second time; "I may not come back alive."

"Is it so desperate as all that?"

"It is indeed."

Gus Darrel looked at him in wondering admiration.

"If I should be captured," said Barboni, "you will open my private desk—you know where it is—and in it you will find papers of interest to yourself."

Darrel gazed at him now in astonishment mixed with wonder.

"No more at present. Deliver my orders. You have my blessing," said Barboni.

He wrung Darrel's hand and rushed away, leaving him much impressed, for he had never seen the brigand so agitated.

It was a glimpse into his inner self.

In spite of his atrocious cruelty and rugged exterior, he had his feelings.

More than that, it was clear that he had a heart.

The enterprise that he had in hand must be of a dangerous nature indeed, thought Darrel, to agitate Barboni in such a manner.

Nor was he wrong.

It was the most audacious scheme that he had yet invented and dared to carry into execution.

The Contessa Di Malafedi received the *elite* of Naples that evening in her most sumptuous rooms.

General Ciardini and his staff were to be present, and a brilliant gathering was expected.

Barboni had determined to be there, too, and to rob every one in the saloon of the precious stones and money which they might carry about them.

To plunder the English was one thing, to despoil the leaders of fashion in Naples, themselves being Neapolitans, was another.

It was a rash enterprise, and even the author of it had doubts as to his success.

But he was a remarkable man, and had every confidence in himself, as far as human foresight and daring could protect him.

He walked quickly to the banks of the Volturno, crossed over in a boat he kept concealed for that purpose, and made his way rapidly to the cave of the Cuman sybil.

Here he was to await the coming of his lieutenant, Hunston, with the band of picked men armed to the teeth.

As for Gus Darrel, he returned to the cave to deliver his orders, and was unable to account for the strange way in which his chief had spoken to him.

He had been so different in his manner to what he usually was.

There was a tenderness in his tone, an almost parental tenderness, which astonished him.

He could not understand this mysterious man at all.

"At all events," he said to himself, "I will protect the pretty Mrs. Harkaway. That villain Hunston shall not have it all his own way."

Providence had raised up a protector for Emily when she least expected it.

So it is in life.

When the clouds gather, or the prospect is most gloomy, an unlooked-for gleam of sunshine darts forth to gladden our very heavy hearts.

We should never despair.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTURE OF THE BRIGAND CHIEF.

WHEN Jack went to General Ciardini to complain of the abduction of Emily by the brigands he was received with the courtesy which was always extended to him by the general.

Immediate orders were given to the troops quartered in Naples to scour the country, and intercept the brigands in their retreat if possible.

The police were put on the alert also.

But the Neapolitans did everything in a half-and-half manner.

There was no spirit, no life, no heart about them.

They did not do things as we do them in England—with a slap and a dash.

Jack returned to his home after a fruitless search with the little coxswain.

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning.

They were both knocked up.

Harvey, Hilda, and Tom Carden were all waiting up for them, and thought that Emily had gone to join her husband.

Their alarm was great when they heard what had happened.

"We must get her back," said Carden. This won't do at all."

"I'm dead beat," said the coxswain. "What with hunting for brigands and getting knocked on the head, and fighting with iron bars, I'm regularly liked."

"Go to sleep, little man," observed Carden. Sleep is good for children."

"I think I'll take your advice," answered Walter Campbell; "and if no one has any objection, I'll pitch on the sofa."

He threw himself down, and was fast asleep in a minute.

Hilda was much concerned at Emily's loss but she said she had no doubt the brigands would demand a heavy ransom, and she would be returned.

After talking the matter over, all retired to rest.

The next morning they were up early, and Tom Carden came from his hotel to breakfast.

Jack could not eat in his usual hearty manner, for his mind was disturbed by thoughts of his missing wife.

That she was treated with civility by the brigands he did not know.

Neither was he aware that Darrel was with the band, and had determined to protect her against Hunston, of whose presence in Naples he was also ignorant.

Soon after breakfast four friends held another brief council, and horses were ordered; they intended to scour the country.

Just as they were about to start, Bigamini made his appearance at the front door.

Monday, who was looking out for the arrival of the horses from the stable, saw him.

He grew very angry.

"Hal!" he cried, "you come back. What for you put me in chest? I teach you to come sneaking about um house."

"My good friend," replied Bigamini, "you entirely misunderstand my character."

"Take um hook," said Monday.

"I want to see your master, kind and considerate negro. Ah! if I have a weakness, it is one for converting the heathen from their savage ways."

"Why you call me heathen savage? Me as good as you."

"Quite," replied Bigamini, humbly. "I have always considered a black infinitely superior to a white."

"You chaff me?" asked Monday.

"No, my sable friend, I have always been the friend of your persecuted race. Let me grasp your manly hand, and forget the past."

Monday held back.

"You're not a bad fellow," cried Bigamini, persuasively. "Your heart is in the right place. You will not despise me because I am miserable Bigamini?"

"Um not want to despise any one," answered Monday, who was softened by the meekness of the little man's manner.

"What have you to fear from me?" Bigamini went on. "Are you not stronger than me? Could you not eat me if you liked? Shake hands and stand a drink?"

"You come 'n my room and have a glass of um wine if you please."

"That's right; 'em up, boys; they're all cocks," cried Bigamini. "Now we should pal up."

If he had been insolent, Monday would have kicked him out; but as he was meek and civil, he softened toward him.

Leading the way into his pantry, he poured out a tumblerful of wine and ice for his guest.

"That warm um up a bit," said he.

"Thank you," replied Bigamini; "my heart overflows with gratitude. Now let us have a little chat. What's your master going to do?"

"Get back um missus," answered Monday.

"Those brigands are desperate fellows."

"They soon laugh wrong side of um mouth," replied Monday.

Jack's voice was heard in the hall.

"Monday," he said, "what a time the horses are coming around. Where are you?"

Hastily putting the bottle and glass away, Monday answered:

"In um pantry, sare."

Jack came to the little room and looked in.

"What are you doing here?" he asked as soon as his eyes fell upon Bigamini.

"Come to see my friend Mr. Monday, sir. Person I esteem very highly, I assure you, sir," answered Bigamini.

"I have my suspicions about you," said Jack, with a frown.

"What have I done, sir?"

"It's my opinion you're a humbug."

Bigamini looked deeply hurt.

"If bigamy and poverty are crimes, sir," he said, "I plead guilty; but if any one had dared to attack my honor when I was a happy Smifline, I'd have knocked his head off."

He tried to look very fierce, and twisted a little bit of moustache which disfigured his upper lip.

"Just explain how it was that you came here last night, and how you knew the Signora Bianca. I can't help thinking you are mixed up in this affair some how."

"This is hard, sir," said the little man. "Until I yielded to the force of circumstances and the power of love, which made me a miserable Bigamini, my character would have borne looking through a powerful microscope."

"That is not an explanation."

"The artist, sir, lodges in the same house with me—that's how I knew her; and if a stranger offers me a drink in the street to deliver a letter to a certain party, I should be a flat if I refused it."

"A stranger?"

"Yes, sir. I could not tell that he was connected with brigands; and I have come here to-day to tender my most humble apologies."

"The man looked sincere, and Jack, who was in a great hurry to be off, did not care to push his examination further."

"Be more careful in future," he said, "and keep your eyes open; you may hear or see something which will be of use to us."

"May I have the proud privilege of accompanying you, sir?"

"When?"

"This morning. In your search for the brigands. Oh, if I could only give it that Barboni hot and strong, I should die happy."

"I don't see what good you can do," replied Jack.

"I can crawl into holes in rocks, sir, and if we find a cave, you can send me in like a dog or a ferret."

"Can you ride?"

"A little, sir. I don't look graceful," replied Bigamini. "You know what ill-natured people say about a little horse."

"Well," said Jack, with a slight laugh, "you shall go."

Bigamini danced for joy.

"Fancy my being admitted to the proud privilege of brigand-hunting in the distinguished company of Mr. Harkaway and friends!" he exclaimed.

"Cut around to the stable and get a horse. Quick!"

"I'm off, sir, like the arrow from the bow, or, more poetically, like the thunderbolt from the storm cloud. Hurrah! here's 'appiness. Hip—hip—"

"Stop his row," said Jack.

Monday slyly put out his foot, and administered a kick to the little man.

"Shut up um mouth," he said, with a grin.

"Mr. Monday, sir," replied Bigamini, rubbing the injured part, "is this friendship, I ask you?"

"Mast' Jack's orders," replied Monday.

Bigamini looked at him, more in sorrow than anger, gave himself another rub, and slowly quitted the pantry. He went to the stable, which was not far off, and found Harvey's English coachman and a groom preparing to lead the saddle-horses out of the yard.

"Mr. Harkaway sent me for another horse," he said.

"For you?" asked the coachman.

"Yes. I'm going brigand-hunting."

"Then you'd best turn it up, and stop at home. Take my tip, it's straight," answered the coachman.

"I'm not afraid. Give me a fast horse."

"There's Black Prince. He stands sixteen and a half hands, is nearly thoroughbred, kicks like blazes, bolts like old boots, and is a regular crib biter."

"That'll do," said Bigamini.

"What!" said the coachman. "Ain't you nervous?"

"Never was yet, except at the sight of my old woman. I'd rather mount your horse than see my missis."

The coachman laughed, and muttered to himself: "If chaps like to break their precious necks, it won't be no business of his'n."

The horse with the bad character was saddled, and the others were taken around.

Jack, Carden, Harvey and the little coxswain mounted, and when they were in the saddle, Bigamini trotted up.

"Which way, sir?" he asked.

"To the sybil's cave first," said Jack. "But, I say, you've got on an awkward sort of brute; did they tell you?"

"They said something about his being nasty-tempered, sir."

"He'll throw him," remarked Harvey.

"Get inside, old cock," observed the coxswain.

"And draw the blinds down," said Carden dryly.

"No fear, gents," replied Bigamini. "I can stick on like glue, and hold the reins with one hand and the pommel of the saddle with the other."

"Show us the way, then, and out out the running," said Jack.

"We don't mean to let the grass grow under our feet," said Harvey.

"Right you are, gentlemen all," cried Bigamini, who touched his horse with the whip.

The Black Prince put back his ears, uttered a snort, and, striking fire with his iron-shod hoofs, dashed off at a mad gallop.

"Bolted!" ejaculated Carden.

"I thought so," replied Jack. "Let's follow him. Are you ready, you fellows?"

The answer being in the affirmative, they started at a quick trot and soon got clear of the town.

All they could see of Bigamini was a cloud of dust in the distance, and this soon vanished.

His horse, going at a racing speed, had taken him out of sight.

The four friends were too much in earnest to waste time in conversation.

As they passed a few lazy Neapolitans, the people regarded them wonderingly.

They thought them mad to go through the severe exercise of riding under a hot sun.

But, hot though it undoubtedly was, they would have gone through fire itself to rescue Emily.

Though they kept up their headlong pace, they could not overtake Bigamini.

Jack felt sorry that he had allowed him to go on such a horse, which was the most vicious beast they had in the stable.

Harvey had bought him because of his speed and cleverness at jumping, intending to get up some steeple chases and show Naples how the English can win races.

At length the ravine leading to the sybil's cave came in view.

The horses were covered with foam, and their riders were white with dust and streaming with perspiration.

Slackening their speed, they walked their steeds, and Jack said:

"We will search the witch's cave before we go any further."

"Does the old hag sell beer?" asked the little coxswain.

"No."

"That's a pity. I'm regularly baked, and she might do a roaring trade in bitters for half an hour with me alone."

"Same here," replied Harvey.

"Don't you seem to like beer when you can't get it?" remarked Carden.

"Is that a horse?" asked Jack, looking down the ravine. "Yes, by Jove! it's the Black Prince. Bigamini has arrived before us, and is cooling himself in the cave, I suppose."

They entered the ravine, feeling glad that the little man had not broken his neck.

Though they had their suspicions about him, they fancied he was more a fool than a knave.

It did not strike them that he had purposely ridden this horse in order that he might arrive first at the cave.

If Barboni was inside, he could warn him of his danger.

Though a wild and lawless man, the brigand was not devoid of superstition.

He frequently visited the sybil to consult her as to his fortune.

If she warned him against an enterprise, he would not undertake it.

Suddenly the four friends saw a man come out of the cave.

He looked stealthily up and down the ravine. The little coxswain had eyes like a lynx, and one glance was enough for him.

"That's Barboni," he exclaimed. "Look! he an

swears all the descriptions of him—slouched hat, cloak, no beard, and fierce moustache."

"It's not unlike him," replied Jack.

"I tell you it is him. Didn't I and you see him last night when we fought the beggars with the iron railings?"

Jack dug his spurs into his jaded horse's flanks.

"Tally ho!" cried the coxswain. "Hark forrard! Tally ho!"

The others passed on, and the clattering of the horses' hoofs on the hard, dry road reached the man's ears.

He took one more hurried, startled glance. It was enough. He did not hesitate a moment, but vaulted lightly on the back of Bigamini's horse.

Black Prince, however, had been "pumped out" by the tremendous pace he was ridden at for so many miles.

There was not much going in him.

Neither was there in the horses of those behind him, yet they were fresher, as they had not been pushed at the top of their speed.

Jack felt positive that the coxswain was right, and that the flying man before them was Barboni.

With a hoarse shout of triumph, he dashed along.

Away went Barboni, with our four friends at his heels. It was an exciting chase.

Soon the coxswain forged ahead, and got dangerously near to the brigand.

Alarmed at hearing a pursuer so close behind him, he turned in the saddle.

Walter was within a dozen yards of him.

Jack came next, Harvey and Carden being side by side a short distance behind.

He took all this in at a glance.

"You'd better give in," shouted the coxswain.

Barboni's reply was to draw a pistol, take deliberate aim, and fire.

But as he pulled the trigger, his tired horse stumbled, and the ball missed its mark. It was not wasted, though.

The coxswain's horse, struck in the shoulder, fell in the dust, and shot his rider over his neck.

"Are you hurt?" asked Jack, as he swept past.

"No," answered Walter, picking himself up.

Barboni's cruel face gleamed with a sparkle of triumph. One enemy was dismounted, if not killed.

Only three remained, and he had struggled with that odds before, and come off victorious.

Jack was satisfied now that he had the famous bandit before him.

He could not mistake that classic face, the thick moustache, the shaven chin, the proud curl of the lip, and the defiant glance of the savage eye.

Barboni urged his sinking horse to its utmost speed, but the poor creature was exhausted.

If he could only reach the banks of the Volturno, he should meet some of his men on their way to Naples, and he would be safe.

Jack now gained upon him.

The thundering of his horse warned Barboni that he was in danger again.

Another hurried look, and again the barrel of the revolver glistened in the sun.

"That's your game, is it?" said Jack between his clinched teeth. "Two can play at that, my boy."

He too drew a pistol. The game was within range, and both fired at once.

Jack made his horse swerve on one side, and the bullet whistled harmlessly past.

But his ball broke the leg of Black Prince, and he fell down in a heap, plunging helplessly and raising a cloud of dust.

In a moment Jack was on the spot.

The dust settled and revealed a black mass by the side of the horse, lying still and motionless.

This was the brigand, who had fallen from the saddle, to find the road harder than his head, and lie stunned.

"By Jove," cried Jack, "I've hit the brigand."

He took off his horse's curb rein, and making hand cuffs of it, fastened Barboni's wrists together.

Then he dragged him to a bank by the river side, where the slight breeze could play upon his face, and waited for Carden and Harvey to come up.

He could scarcely believe in the reality of this splendid capture. It had all happened so quickly and smoothly, without much trouble or loss of life.

What neither the police of Naples nor all the troops under the command of General Cialdini could do, he had effected.

"Bravo! Harkaway," exclaimed, Tom Carden, jumping from his horse.

"You've done the trick, I see," said Harvey, following.

"Yes. We have captured Barboni; and now his band will belike a venomous serpent without a head."

At the mention of this name, the brigand opened his eyes and looked around.

CHAPTER XII.

"WILL HE DO IT."

At the same moment the little coxswain, who had sustained our friends, approached the friends.

"Hullo! old Tommy Dodd," he exclaimed, "how do you find yourself, eh? How you was to-morrow, old Schneider?"

"I am a prisoner," answered the brigand, "yet that is no reason why I should be mocked by a boy."

"Can't you stand chaff? Sorry for you, then; you'll have to try."

"Harkaway, the Englishman, has captured me," continued Barboni, "and I expect that courtesy from him which I am at present extending to his wife."

"You admit that you are Barboni?" said Jack.

"I do, and still defy you."

The brigand drew himself up haughtily in the presence of his captors.

"Is my wife alive and well?" Jack asked eagerly.

"She is."

"Her life is in no danger?"

"None. She is as well treated as circumstances will permit, and, if you like to listen to reason I will make you an offer."

"Name it," cried Jack, whose mind was much relieved by what he had heard.

"I will exchange Mrs. Harkaway for myself. Let me go, and you shall have your wife."

The offer was very tempting, and Jack had a great mind to accept it.

What was the public execution of the brigand to the delight of clasping his beloved Emily once more in his arms?

Seeing that he was inclined to yield, Tom Carden spoke.

"I have a word to say in this on public grounds," he exclaimed.

"Leave me to deal with Mr. Harkaway," cried the brigand, biting his lip with annoyance.

"You can say what you like, presently. I only wish to state that it would be madness to trust to your word."

"You need not give me my liberty until I place Mrs. Harkaway in your own hands."

"You hear that, Tom?" cried Jack, eagerly.

"We are sure to get Emily sooner or later," said Carden; "and I say we shall make a mull of it, and be a set of muffs, if we let this scamp go. It is a duty we owe to the public to stick to him like seven leeches."

There was another moment of hesitation, and then Jack's face cleared.

"You are right, Tom. I ought not to think of myself in this case," he said.

"You agree with me, then?"

"I do. He is not our prisoner; he belongs to the state."

"That's my idea. We'll get Emily by-and-by," exclaimed Carden; "never fear."

The brigand was silent as if he would not condescend to beg any further for his liberty.

Jack had made an immense sacrifice, and only himself knew what it had cost him.

But he had the consolation of feeling that he had done what was right.

Barboni arose and looked grand, even in his captivity.

He was a sort of Sampson among the Philistines.

"Mr. Harkaway," he said; "I will not humble myself by arguing with you."

"Oh!" replied Jack, a little agitated; "I am willing to listen to you."

"It is your intention to deliver me to the authorities?"

"Certainly."

"Have you reflected?"

"It requires no thinking about. I was a little nervous about my poor wife at first, but directly Carden spoke I saw he was right."

There was a noise in the distance.

Rub-a-dub-dub, tub-tub, tub-tub.

Tantara, tantara.

"The soldiers!" cried the little coxswain.

It was the drum and bugle of a body of Bersaglieri.

"Too late!" murmured the brigand.

Turning to Jack, he added:

"If anything happens to me, your wife will die; my death will seal her fate," he said. "But if you hand me over to the soldiers as a prisoner of war, all will be well."

"I shall do so."

"You will not allow them to try me on a drum-head, and shoot me like a dog?"

"No; you will be tried by the courts at Naples; I promise you that," said Jack.

"Then all will be well. I may make terms for the release of Mrs. Harkaway."

"What terms?"

"I cannot talk now. Where shall you be this evening?"

"I am engaged," replied Jack; "the fact is, we have all accepted invitations to be at the Contessa Di Malafedi's to-night."

"At the contessa's?" repeated the brigand, carelessly.

"Yes."

"I thought you were not very good friends since the Villanova affair and the scene at the sybil's grotto."

"Nor are we; but all Naples will be there, and to tell you the truth," answered Jack, "I wanted to ask the contessa to use her influence with you."

"With me? There is no connection between us."

"No? I thought there was, and she might obtain my wife's release."

"We will talk the matter over this evening," said Barboni.

"But I have told you I cannot come to your prison to-night."

"I do not want you to."

"Then how shall we meet?"

"At the contessa's. To-night, as the clock strikes twelve, I will be with you at Malafedi's," answered Barboni, carelessly.

"Are you mad, man alive?" said Jack, staring at him.

"Do I look like it?"

"You will be in the securest dungeon the police can find for you, in a couple of hours' time."

"Never mind that. I will meet you at the countess's as the clocks are on the stroke of midnight."

Barboni spoke with the certainty of conviction.

"Bet you six to four you don't," said the little coxswain.

"I don't bet with children," replied the brigand; "neither am I addressing my remarks to you."

"It's lucky for you you've got braceleted up," replied Walter, in a tone of deep disgust, "or I'd punch your head for your cheek."

"Have you marked me well, Mr. Harkaway?" continued Barboni.

"Yes, I accept your meeting, though I fear there is little chance of your keeping your appointment," answered Jack.

"Time will show."

A little man was seen limping along the road, and as he drew nearer, the coxswain exclaimed:

"Here's that rascal Bigamini; he ought to be let up too."

Bigamini heard this, and hastened to say:

"That's unkind, sir. I have always been respected as the soul of honor, and when I was a happy Smiffins—"

"How was it, Barboni got out of the cave and nipped away a most in time to get off clear?"

"Is that Barboni?" asked Bigamini, straining his eyes at the chief.

"Yes."

What, the great brigand?"

He drew back in alarm, and stared as if he had never seen him before.

"You don't mean to say he's the awful bandit?" he continued.

"Of course he is. Didn't you give him the tip that we were coming?"

"No, sir—on the honor of a once happy Smiffins, I did not. He can't get loose, sir, can he?"

"Not he."

"Ask him, sir, if I didn't see him in the cave, and if he didn't fall upon me, and we had a tussel in which he shinned me dreadful?"

"If it is of any service to the man," said Barboni, "I can say frankly I do not know him, nor have we met before."

There! I told you he'd say I was nothing to him," cried Bigamini.

"When I heard a horse stop, and saw a man enter the cave while I was consulting the fortune teller, I thought he was an enemy," Barboni went on.

"And we had a fight!"

"I simply knocked you down, and may have kicked your carcass out of my way," replied Barboni, with a look of supreme disdain.

"There!" cried Bigamini again. "Who's right now, Mr. Sharpshins?"

"Don't call me names," said the coxswain, angrily. "I've had to wait you once before, and I can do it again."

"Beg pardon sir—but you've got such a aggravating way. Keep him off; I'm afraid of brigands."

"He won't hurt you," replied Jack. "I am glad your character is cleared, as I should have tackled you rather hotly, my little man."

"Thank you, Mr. Harkaway; you're a gentleman, sir, and Oxford all over."

"Go and call the soldiers here. You can hear the drum, can't you?"

"Yes, sir. They've got a foolish way of kicking up a row when they want to catch a weasel asleep," replied Bigamini, with a grin.

The brigand also smiled as Bigamini limped off, pretending that his leg was very stiff and bad where the chief had kicked him, though if he had pulled his trousers up, it would have been seen that he hadn't got a scratch.

"I am no more afraid of a regiment of Italian soldiers," remarked Barboni, "than I am of a flock of sheep."

"They don't seem to be up to much in the way of brigand hunting, if they couldnt catch you," remarked the little coxswain.

"I am not so easily caught," replied Barboni.

"Any how, we weren't long over copping you, my hearty."

"You had nothing to do with it. I dropped you quickly enough," said the brigand.

There was a laugh at this in which Barboni joined.

"He had you there, Walter," observed Carden.

"Let those laugh who win. He is copped—ain't he?—whether I had a hand in it or not, and I'll bet he wishes himself anywhere else," answered the coxswain.

"Can you dance a hornpipe?" asked Barboni.

"Yes, against the world."

"And sing songs?"

"Lots of them—rattlers."

"I'll have you captured and taken alive to my cave," said Barboni.

"Capture me!" repeated the little coxswain, angrily.

"Yes. I want a fool to amuse me when I'm dull."

"Chaff away, old son. It's a case of Jack up the orchard with you, and I don't think you'll have a chance of capturing any one else."

"You think not?" said Barboni, with a sneer.

"I don't think—I'm sure of it. The next dance you have anything to do with will be when you're dancing on nothing, with a rope around your neck."

"Thank you," replied the chief. "You are very brave, and extremely gentlemanly to insult a fallen foe."

"I don't call you a foe; you're an enemy to mankind," answered Walter, indignantly; "and I can't get up any romance over a vulgar thief."

Barboni flushed angrily.

"You will repent those words, young man, and regret your insolence," he said.

"I never regret anything I say or do, and I repeat that I wish to have nothing to do with a miserable out-throat like yourself."

Jack took the little coxswain's arm, and led him on one side.

"Don't get needled, Walter," he said.

"He shouldn't chaff a gentlemen," replied Walter.

"But it isn't generous to say anything to him when he's down, let the man's faults be what they may. He's in our power now, and will go to the scaffold, whatever he may say to the contrary."

"That's true enough, and if he wouldn't be so cocky, I should be inclined to pity him," rejoined Walter.

"Well, let him alone, there's a good fellow."

"Oh, he may go and hunt spiders for what I care," answered the coxswain.

The conversation was interrupted by the approach of the soldiers, who were much excited at the news of the capture of the great Barboni.

He was formally delivered into the charge of the commanding officer, who held himself personally responsible for his safe conduct to Naples.

Soldiers before him, soldiers behind him, soldiers on all sides of him.

Bayonets glistening in the sunshine at the top of loaded rifles.

Twice fifty men ready to shoot him on the least provocation.

On his way to a dungeon and a scaffold, Barboni, yet bore himself majestically, and seemed to smile at fate.

"By your right, quick march," said the commanding officer.

The men step out, the arms rattle, and the brigand, looking over his shoulder, says:

"At midnight at the contessa's, Mr. Harkaway."

And Jack nods his head dubiously as he answers:

"I shall be there."

Bigamini walked after the soldiers, listening to the music and keeping step, as if he liked it.

There were but three horses left for the four friends to return on.

"Who'll give me a back?" asked the coxswain.

"I will," replied Tom Carden. "Come here, young one."

Walter approached, and Tom Carden, stooping down, took him by the collar as if he had been a kitten.

A vigorous pull of that strong arm, and the coxswain was hoisted up on the crupper of the horse.

"Thank you," replied Walter, putting his arm around Tom's waist to hold on. "But, I say?"

"What?"

"When you do that again, remember there is no occasion to kill me by kindness. I was nearly strangled."

"All right, young one," replied Tom, in a fatherly voice. "Hang on tight."

The three horses started at a fair pace, and soon overtook the soldiers.

Barboni's eye caught Jack's, and there was a merry twinkle in it.

Evidently the brigand did not trouble himself greatly at his position.

Jack was thinking of the audacious promise of Barboni. He, a captive, had promised to meet him at the contessa's reception that night at twelve o'clock.

It seemed impossible.

"Will he do it?" said Jack to himself.

That question could only be answered as the clock struck the dread hour of midnight.

When they reached Naples, Jack rode at once to the chief of the police and to General Cialdini, to announce the important capture he had made.

He was congratulated on all sides.

The news flew like wildfire through the city.

Excited groups gathered in the cafes, at the Europa, at the street corners, in the Strada di Toledo, the Corso, and the Villa Reale.

It was the one engrossing topic of conversation.

The evening papers had an account of it, with the usual exaggerations, printed in leaded type.

Jack was the hero of the hour.

CHAPTER XIII.

LILY COCKLES' ARRIVAL.

An Englishman, as usual, on the continent, had done what none of the natives could.

But there was a blank in his heart; for, though Jack had captured Barboni, he had not recovered his darling Emily.

His friends did all they could to cheer him up, and assured him that Emily's restoration to her home was only a question of time.

Hilda nursed and took care of his little child, who was told, when he asked for mamma, that she would be back soon.

Harvey met him on the stairs, and said, in an excited voice:

"Who do you think is here?"

"Can't tell. Not Emily!" replied Jack, grasping like a drowning man at a straw.

"You'll never guess."

"I shan't try. Who is it?"

"Don't be glumpy, old man. It's Lily-Cockles," answered Harvey.

"When did she come?"

"This afternoon. You know the old dad's dead, and Lily was so affected that they had to put her in a private asylum."

"Well?"

"She soon got all right when the excitement passed off, and finding herself an heiress, she determined to come over to us."

"I am sure Emily would have been delighted to see her," answered Jack. "Where is she?"

"Up stairs. She's much cut up about Emily, but as jolly as can be expected," replied Harvey.

"Of course, Hilda will see that she is made comfortable."

"Oh, yes. You can leave all that to Hilda. The two are not strangers, and Lily seems to take wonderfully to her."

"It's a good chance for the little coxswain," said Jack who, worried as he was with his own private affairs, could not help thinking of his friends.

"He's on like grub already," replied Harvey.

"Is he?"

"Yes. Awfully hard hit directly he saw her, and Lily is a pretty girl you know."

"So she is," replied Jack. "Let them spoon. Walter may make a match of it if the brigands don't carry her off."

"We must have another go in at them, and find out their cave," replied Harvey. "I don't think we shall have much trouble now we've got the chief."

"Give me back Emily, and I don't care a rush," answered Jack, diamally.

"What an old croaker you are. Go and dress for dinner. All will come right."

"Would you like Hilda to be among brigands?"

"No; but I'd make the best of it, and not mope. Barboni told you she was all right, and we've lots to think of. Wonder whether he'll keep his word?"

"Who? Barboni?"

"Yes. You know he said he'd be at the contessa's to-night," said Harvey.

"It wouldn't surprise me," replied Jack. "I believe he and the contessa row in together."

"So do I. They're in the same swim for a hundred."

They went up stairs and met Walter Campbell on the landing.

"Going to my hotel to dress," he said. "You've got company, Miss Lily Cockles, you know. Must cut a shine before ladies."

"Go and beautify yourself," said Jack, smiling; "Lily is worth catching. She's got lots of tin."

"Has she?"

"Heaps."

"That doesn't matter; she's got what I like ever so much more, and that's a pretty face and a nice manner."

"Look out for the tin, my boy," exclaimed Jack; "that will last longer, if you take care of it, than pretty faces."

"Did you marry for money, Harkaway?" asked the little coxswain.

"No."

"I thought not. I should not have liked you if you had. There can't be any harm in falling in love and being genuine, can there?" said Walter.

"Not in the least. A man or boy can't be a good fellow unless he is genuine," exclaimed Jack. "But what I meant was that if you can love a girl who has a little tin, it is all the jollier for a poor man."

The little coxswain nodded his head as if he quite caught Jack's meaning.

The banisters seemed to him to present the easiest means of getting downstairs, and, getting astride, he slid along, to the great danger of his neck, alighting safely, however, in the hall.

"That kid will run a mucker some day," remarked Harvey, "if he goes sliding down banisters like that."

"Not he; that sort of youngster never comes to grief," answered Jack.

"He's smart for his age."

"I'd turn him up amongst a hundred boys, and make him favorite against the field," said Jack.

"What I like about him is that there is no nonsense," answered Harvey. "He's a regular little brick."

"So he is," exclaimed Jack.

They had now reached the drawing-room door, and while Harvey went upstairs to dress, Jack entered to make Lily welcome, and assure her how glad he was to see her.

Miss Lily Cockles was paler and thinner than when we saw her last, and had gone through severe trials.

But calmness and resignation had come to her aid.

Hilda received and treated her like a sister.

With our little party at Naples she found what her poor bruised heart wanted above all things.

That was a home.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEETING AT MIDNIGHT.

BIGAMINI followed the soldiers with other idlers to the prison in which Barboni was placed.

He asked a variety of questions, and gossiped with the guards, ascertaining that the brigand was lodged in a strong cell on the ground floor.

From the prison he hurried to the Contessa di Malafedi's palazzo.

Here he remained for some time.

As the shades of night began to fall, several men arrived at the door, and were all admitted by Bigamini.

He spoke in a friendly tone to them, and appeared to be on terms of intimacy with most.

Fierce, savage-looking men they were, looking as if they were capable of committing any atrocity.

At the hour of ten he quitted the palazzo in the Strada Nuovo, and made his way to the prison.

The guard had just been changed.

Under his arm he carried a bundle, and, approaching the porter's lodge, entered it.

The porter recognized him with a nod, and they spoke earnestly together in whispers for some time.

"Come this way," said the porter at last.

He conducted him along a stone passage until they reached the room of the jailor, whose name was Guiseppe.

"Fine times, Guiseppe," said the porter. "We've caged a big bird at last, *amico mio*."

"You mean Barboni," exclaimed the jailor. "Cospetto! we shall have some fun now."

He looked inquiringly at Bigamini.

"A friend of mine," said the porter, "the Prince di Villanova's valet."

"Ah, the prince shot the heretic Englishman at the Contessa di Malafedi's ball. I remember."

"Pitty he had not killed the heretic Englishman—how do you call him?"

"Signor Harkawini, or some such name," put in the gaoler.

"Yes, that is it. Well, he has captured our chief of the brigands."

"Those Inglesi," said Guiseppe, "can never let us alone. Santa Maria! why can't they stop in their own foggy country?"

"That is what I say," replied the porter.

"I except my master to visit Barboni," replied Bigamini. "He sent me on first, and said he should be here and as I was going to see my old friend Luigi, I brought a bottle of good wine from our cellar."

"Guiseppe will taste it," said the porter.

"You are not far wrong," answered the gaoler. "I have just finished making up my returns, and I shall be glad of a glass."

Bigamini produced a bottle from his bundle, drew the cork, and a glass being forthcoming, three pledged each other.

"I wish I could get out for half an hour," said Guiseppe, smacking his lips, and adding "rare good wine,

this. Per Baccho! that wasn't put in the cellar yesterday."

"My master has as good wine as any one in Italy," replied Bigamini.

"It strikes me you're English," said the gaoler; "your accent has a foreign sound."

"But I'm a good Catholic, and go to mass," answered Bigamini.

"That makes a difference."

"Try another glass," said Bigamini; "it won't hurt you, and if you want to go out to see a pair of black eyes, I'm sure Luigi will take your place."

"That I will," answered the porter; "and it wouldn't be the first time either. Our Guiseppe is a perfect diavolo after the fair sex."

"What would you have a man do?" asked the gaoler, with a smile.

"Why, drink to my toast—dark eyes and glossy hair, or the beauties of Naples," said the porter.

Each man emptied his glass.

"Poor Barboni. They say he carried off the Englishman's wife yesterday," remarked the gaoler.

"Ah!" exclaimed Luigi. "Those Inglesi are devils if you interfere with their women; but go out, *amico mio*, if you have a mind. I'll keep the keys and mind the place."

"Santo Dio!" answered Guiseppe. "It is just the time when Bianca said she would wait for me outside. You know the pretty artist, Luigi?"

"You're a lucky fellow," answered the porter. "Go and take advantage of your good fortune."

"I will. The general has been around when the guard was changed, so that there is no danger of my being missed," replied Guiseppe.

He drank another glass of wine, which Bigamini pressed upon him, and, taking his hat, left the prison.

His keys were hanging on a nail.

The heavy tramp of the doubled guard could be heard on the stone flags of the prison corridor, leading to Barboni's cell.

When the jailor was gone, the porter said to Bigamini:

"Now, quick; the reward."

Bigamini placed in his outstretched hand a bag of gold.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked.

"Perfectly. You have done your part; now I will do mine; follow me. *Santissima Vergine!* It is strange if two heads like ours cannot arrange a trifle like this."

The porter, taking up the keys, and dangling them on his waist, advanced to the guard, who grounded arms at his approach.

"Let us pass, friend," said he; "we have business in the brigand's cell."

"What business?" asked the soldier.

"The Prince di Villanova is with Barboni, and this is his servant."

"I have seen no prince or any other man go into the cell," replied the guard.

"Cospetto!" said Luigi, "how simple you are."

"Why?"

"How long have you been on duty?"

"A quarter of an hour, or thereabouts."

"Exactly," said the porter; "you know nothing about it. The prince was admitted before you came on guard. His time was an hour. It is up. I must let him out. Do you see now?"

"My order sare from the general," replied the soldier.

"What are they?"

"To let no one pass."

"Without an order I suppose?"

"Precisely so."

"But," said Luigi, "the prince is in the cell with the brigand. He came to induce him to give up an English lady he had captured. Surely the gaoler can go where he likes in the prison?"

"You are not the gaoler," replied the soldier.

"I am his deputy. He has left me his keys, while he goes for half an hour to see his *bella donna*."

"You should have an order."

Luigi shook the keys.

"Are these not enough?" he asked. "What more do you want?"

"Do you think I intend to release Barboni?"

"No, no," laughed the soldier; "you would be clever to do that."

"You know him by sight, of course?"

"Yes; I was with the detachment to which he was given this morning. He is a man without any beard. No one could mistake him."

"Then you are not likely to take the Prince di Villanova for the brigand?"

"Not at all; everybody in Naples knows the prince. He wears a beard, and you could not take him for Barboni," answered the soldier.

"Stand on one side, then, and let the prince's valet and me pass," said Luigi.

"Pass," said the soldier, who did not see the use of holding out any longer.

Bigamini and the porter went along the corridor and met the second guard.

"Halt!" he exclaimed, raising his loaded weapon in a threatening manner.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Luigi.

"Is all well?" inquired the second guard of the first.

"Si," replied the soldier they had just spoken to.

"Pass," said the guard, lowering his rifle.

The two men hurried on to the end of the corridor, where a door studded with iron nails met their gaze.

A capacious keyhole indicated an equally capacious lock, and the porter selected one of the biggest keys in the bunch to open it with.

His effort was successful.

The heavy door at once rolled back on its hinges.

Bigamini was not long inside the cell.

Pushing open the door, he stepped out, followed by a tall, handsome man in evening dress, with a light coat covering him.

"Stand on one side," he said, "and let my master, the Prince di Villanova, pass."

Luigi, the porter, fell back.

The guards stopped in their march up and down the corridor.

They seemed doubtful as to what their duty should be. Bigamini had shut the door of the cell again, locked it, and handed the key to Luigi.

"We saw no prince come in," said one soldier.

"Of course you didn't," answered Bigamini.

"Why shouldn't we?"

"Because he was admitted before the guard was changed, and he came in through the guard's entrance."

"Ah," said the soldiers, "that makes a difference."

"I wish Guiseppe, the jailer, was here," said Luigi.

"Hold your tongue, fool," said Bigamini. "Do you want to anger the prince?"

"What has the prince been doing with Barboni?"

"He's got business with him, or the governor would not have admitted him."

"But—"

"Do you want to lose your berth, and perhaps your life?" asked Bigamini, angrily.

"Lose my situation and my life!" exclaimed the man.

"Of course I don't wish that."

"Be quiet, then, and treat the prince properly," said Bigamini.

Villanova smilingly presented a slip of paper.

"My friends," he said, "this is a pass from General Cialdini. Do you require anything further?"

Luigi looked at it.

"That's the general's writing, sure enough," he remarked.

"We only want to do our duty," grumbled a soldier.

"Do it, then. Present arms, and let the prince pass," said Bigamini.

The soldiers looked at Luigi.

"It's all right," returned the latter. "Present!"

The guard presented arms.

The Prince di Villanova walked quickly from the strongly-built prison, followed by Bigamini and preceded by Luigi.

Once in the street, he whispered a few hurried words to Bigamini.

At the corner of the street a carriage was waiting.

Getting into this, he was rapidly driven away in the direction of the better part of Naples.

The carriage stopped at the palazzo of the Contessa di Malafedi.

This was brilliantly illuminated.

Strains of music floated out into the street through the open windows.

The majority of the guests seemed to have arrived, as few carriages were setting down visitors.

Alighting from the carriage, the prince smilingly acknowledged the salutes of the attendants.

He ascended the spacious marble staircase through a garden of costly exotics and flowering shrubs.

At the entrance to the ballroom the major-domo said in a loud voice:

"His Highness Francesco Ferdinando Emmanuele, Prince di Villanova."

Every eye was turned upon the new comer, who, since he shot at Harkaway, had become a celebrity in chatting, gossiping Naples.

A smile of relief seemed to come over the face of the contessa, who was surrounded by a group of officers in uniform.

Conspicuous among them was General Cialdini, who, from his height and figure, was easily distinguished from his staff.

The contessa held out her hand saying:

"So pleased to see you. I almost feared circumstances would prevent you from honoring my poor saloon with your company."

"How could I stay away from so much delight and beauty? It would have been equal to ruining one's chance of Paradise," answered the prince.

"Ah, Villanova," said the General, "glad to see you."

"Thanks, your excellency is much too good."

"Of course you have heard the news?" remarked the contessa.

"You mean the capture of Barboni?" he replied.

"Yes."

"Oh, that is old news to me. I have been to see the fellow," said the prince, carelessly.

"Indeed?"

"I sent my servant to the general for a pass, which he was good enough to give me, and I exerted my eloquence upon the bandit to induce him to tell me what he had done with Mrs. Harkaway, whom I hoped to restore to her husband's arms this very night."

"How good of you."

The prince stroked his glossy beard.

"What was the result?" asked the general.

"The wretch received me with sullen indifference, and said he would only talk to Mr. Harkaway himself about that."

"How hardened," said the contessa.

"Why, yes, he seems to have a hide like a rhinoceros, and about as much conscience as a mosquito."

"It is a great satisfaction to me to think that we have him safe after all," observed the general; "he has given me a great deal of trouble."

They were absurd enough to say that you and the brigand were connected in some mysterious way," said a young nobleman.

"To whom do you allude?" asked the prince.

"The Inglesi."

"Cospetto!" said the prince; "cannot we make some allowance for these English, whose only accomplishments are making steam engines and ships, buying and selling, and eating roast beef?"

There was a general laugh at this.

"For my part," remarked the general, "I knew all along it was an impossibility."

"Thank you," said Villanova, with a smile. "We are not much at all, I flatter myself."

After chatting here, and shaking hands there, he walked up the room.

Near a window were the four friends.

"Look out, Jack," said Harvey.

"What for?"

"There is Villanova coming toward us."

"Is it? So it is, by Jove!" answered Jack.

Carden looked at the approaching figure with considerable astonishment.

"That knocks my theory on the head," he said.

"What does?" asked the little coxswain.

"Why, don't you see, we've got Barboni under lock and key in the State prison?"

"Yes."

"And here is Villanova; so that Barboni and Villanova can't be the one and same person."

"No, by Jove!" replied Walter Campbell. "Stop a bit, though."

"Why?"

"There's a chimney. I'll put my hand up and smudge it with soot."

"What for?" asked Carden, puzzled.

"When I shake hands with the prince, I shall black his glove inside, and if Barboni should appear at midnight, and his right hand glove is blacked, it will be a curious thing, won't it?"

"Rather. You've got some ideas in that little pimple of yours, young one," answered Carden, smiling approvingly.

"Some of us ought to have; you haven't got many," answered Walter, with a laugh.

"Don't you be too cocky, young one; you're not too old to lick," rejoined Tom, pretending to be angry.

"Hullo! here's Carden in a wax," cried the little coxswain.

"What's riled the old bear?" grinned Jack.

"I trod on his toes."

"I wonder if some people's ears would stretch if they were pulled," said Tom.

"Yours don't want pulling," replied Walter.

"Why not?"

"They're long and thin already. Got any donkeys in your family?"

"Be off up the chimney. Here's the prince," said Carden, who was getting the worst of the chaff.

Walter disappeared, and blackened the inside of his white kid glove.

When he came back, he was just in time to shake hands with the prince.

But his eye was as quick as lightning.

Without pretending to have done so, he had watched Walter Campbell leave the group.

One glance at his glove showed him that the trick had been so far successful.

"There is something on your glove, amico mio," he said, "and mine too."

"Is there?" said Walter, in some confusion.

"Is it not odd, Mr. Harkaway, that one cannot touch pitch without being defiled?"

"Oh, I'm sure it was an accident," said Jack, reddening.

"No—no. You distrust me, I see you do. No matter, I will retain this glove. It will gratify you, perhaps, as gentlemen do not spoil their own and other people's gloves for nothing."

Tom drew the little coxswain on one side.

"What a sharp beggar he is," he remarked.

"He's up to snuff, and no flies," answered Walter. "I felt inclined to kick him when he checked me, but I was in the wrong. I don't half like it though. What did he call me?"

"Pitch," answered Carden, laughing heartily.

"Hang my sister's cat, I can't stand being called pitch, can I?"

"Poor little man. Isn't it nice to be snubbed, especially when one has such fine ideas?"

"Now, look here, do you want to work me up?"

"I don't think you're quite up to the boiling point yet."

"Yes I am. I'm boiling over. If I don't sit on the safety valve I shall burst. No, hang me if I do. I'll have it out with that son of a gun."

Before Carden could prevent him, the little coxswain strode up to the prince with a defiant air.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you made use of an unpleasant expression just now."

Villanova looked at him compassionately.

"Do you mean to apologize?" persisted Walter.

"I never apologize to children," answered the prince.

"If they fancy I have hurt their feelings, I give them a few soldi to buy sweet stuff."

Walter Campbell was furious.

Always very hasty, he did not stay to consider that he was the guest of the contessa, and in her ball-room.

"What do you mean by it?" he asked, angrily confronting the prince.

"Mr. Harkaway," said Villanova, "is your little friend at all afflicted here?"

He touched his forehead significantly.

"I am no more mad than you are," replied Walter.

"He is only hasty," said Jack.

"If he belonged to me—but I will say no more. Kindly talk to him, will you?"

The little coxswain faced the prince now.

Without any further warning than "mind your eye, old cock," he struck out at him.

Villanova stepped back.

The blow hit him with considerable force in the chest.

With admirable good temper, he smiled.

"Mr. Harkaway," he said, "I must beg of you to restrain this boy. I shall not chastise him, as I do not want to be the hero of another scene at the Contessa di Malafedi's."

"For goodness sake be quiet," said Jack.

"I'm not afraid of him. Let him come on."

"Remember where you are."

"Oh! we've got this part of the room to ourselves, and we can get behind that screen."

"If you had your deserts, you would be whipped and put to bed!" replied the prince, with a mocking laugh.

"Carden," said Jack, "take the young one away; he's had too much champagne."

"I'm not going to be called names," replied Walter.

Carden interfered, and seizing the little coxswain's arm dragged him to a recess near a window.

Harvey followed.

"Don't be an idiot," said Tom. "Do you want to get our names up in Naples as a set of cads?"

"Naples don't keep me," snarled Walter.

"Stand still, I tell you. What, you won't? I shall have to sit on you."

"If you run about wild like this, you will get pretty considerably smashed up," observed Harvey. "Wait for him outside, but never cut up a shindy before ladies."

"All right, I suppose I'm wrong. I'll be quiet. Leave go," answered Walter.

Harvey noticed blood on his hands.

"What's the matter with your hand?" he asked.

"Can't tell; barked my fist though. I thought I felt something jolly hard when I hit that cove. It was like striking a lamp-post."

"Curious," said Tom Carden. "It couldn't have been a stud, because the skin is off all around. Wonder if he wears anything underneath?"

Jack meantime was talking to the prince.

"I hope you will pardon my friend," said Jack; "he is a little excitable at times."

"Very much so, I should say," replied the prince.

"Don't take any notice of him."

"I will not. Let us forget him. Flies and gnats are troublesome, but, after all, they are insignificant."

"It wouldn't be well for you if he heard you," answered Jack; "but I don't want a row now. It is close upon twelve, and I have an appointment."

"With whom?"

"That scoundrel Barboni."

"How is that?"

"Oh, out of brag, I suppose, more than anything else, he said this morning, when he was captured, that he would meet me at this bail at midnight."

"Have you told any one of this?"

"Not a soul."

"No one knows it but you and your friends?" asked the prince.

"No."

"Poor fellow," said Villanova, "I think he will find it rather difficult to keep his word, though I have heard that Barboni never yet broke his promise."

Jack laughed.

"I wish I had a thousand pounds on it," he said.

"On what?"

"On the event."

"How would you bet?" demanded Villanova.

"A level thou, that Barboni is not here this evening as the clock strikes twelve."

"Done with you," said the prince, quickly.

"What?" said Jack, in surprise; "do you take the bet?"

"Yes."

"You are sure to lose."

"Perhaps; what matters if I do? One must have a little excitement this hot weather. If I win, come over to my place to-morrow morning and lunch with me; not that I want the cash, but I should like to have a hearty laugh at you."

"Let those laugh that win," answered Jack.

He took out his watch and looked at it.

It wanted but five minutes to twelve.

"In five minutes," he ejaculated.

"Ah, excuse me," said the prince; "I see the contessa beckoning to me."

With a pleasant smile, and stroking his glossy beard, as was his custom, Villanova glided away.

He was soon lost in the throng.

"Nice fellow when he likes to be," thought Jack.

"But he'll drop his coin over Barboni."

CHAPTER XV.

BARBONI KEEPS HIS WORD.

JACK rejoined his companions.

They were at the north end of the room.

The contessa and her guests were chiefly congregated in the center, and at the top or south end where the refreshment room was.

On the east side, in the middle, the band was placed in an orchestra or balcony.

Dancing had ceased for a brief while, and heated couples were promenading the saloon, or struggling for food drinks.

Neither Hilda or Lily had come to the ball.

Lily was not very well, and Hilda feared any excitement would do her harm.

Besides this, she was so grieved at Emily's loss that she did not care to appear in public.

Jack touched Walter on the shoulder.

"You've been going it, young one," he exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't I, when that beastly old prince insulted me?" answered the little coxswain.

"You began it by blacking his glove."

"That was only a dodge. He'd better keep his eye peeled, for I shall be on him like a grub when I have the chance."

"He does not like you, old man," said Jack.

"Then he may lump it, for all I care? I'm not going to be called names and treated like a child. But I'll have it out with him some day."

At the end of the room was a screen, though what was behind it could not be seen.

"Shut up about the prince," said Carden. "He's a puzzle to me, and it riles me to think of him. Look at that screen; doesn't it look ghostly in the shadow?"

"Ping—ping—ping."

A clock on the mantelpiece began to strike the hour.

"Midnight," replied Jack.

His heart beat a little faster.

"You've gone quite white," exclaimed Harvey.

"Have I?" said Jack.

"Yes, a sheet's a fool to you. Do you expect Barboni?"

"Nine, ten, eleven," counted Jack. "By George! That's that?"

Ere the last stroke of the clock had died away, a somber form emerged from behind the screen.

The figure was tall and commanding.

A black mask hid the upper part of the face, just revealing dark, flashing eyes and well-cut mouth, about which a sardonic smile was playing, and showing the beardless chin.

On the head was a slouched hat ornamented with a feather.

The form was shrouded in the ample folds of a long cloak.

"Vi saluta, Barboni!" rang through the room, filling every nook and corner.

Every one was startled.

A dead silence fell upon the gay and giddy crowd, which could not have been more effectually hushed if the beautiful hostess had suddenly fallen lifeless in their midst.

Advancing fearlessly to Jack, the intruder stopped within a dozen paces of him.

"Mr. Harkaway," he said, "Barboni keeps his word."

General Cialdini and his staff, followed by many of the curious guests, came down the room.

Turning toward them, the brigand waved his hand.

"Back, all of you!" he cried.

There was a sudden halt.

"My business here," continued Barboni, "is with an Englishman. Molest me not. One whistle from me, and the room shall swarm with my men."

The gentlemen looked confounded.

The ladies shrieked.

Some went into hysterics, while many hastily removed and hid their jewelry, remembering that the brigand chief had a fancy for trinkets set with precious stones.

"Mr. Harkaway, if you wish to speak to me, you are at liberty to do so," continued Barboni.

He stood with his arms folded, and cast defiant glances around.

"I have but one question to ask," answered Jack.

"Name it."

"What ransom will you take for my wife?"

The answer came slowly and solemnly.

"None."

"Do you mean to keep her a prisoner?" asked Jack, aghast.

"Return to England with your companions, and one day after your arrival on British soil, your wife shall rejoin you."

Thus spoke the brigand.

"Is this your final resolve?"

"It is."

Jack's heart sank within him.

The little coxswain sprang forward and touched Jack on the arm.

"Are you going to stand this?" he asked.

"What can I do?" asked Jack.

"Shoot the rascal!"

"Perhaps he will revenge himself upon Emily."

"He can't blame you if I try to pot him," said Walter.

Several gentlemen had tried to escape from the saloon to summon assistance.

But all the doors were guarded by fierce-looking men in slouch hats.

These were armed to the teeth.

Unfortunately no one had any pistols with him, as these are not generally taken to balls.

This surprise had not been expected.

Suddenly the little coxswain uttered a cry of joy.

"I've got a pea-shooter!" he exclaimed.

As he spoke, he produced from his coat-tail pocket a revolver.

It had five chambers.

"I'd almost forgotten it," he added, "but I shoved it in at the last moment, thinking we might meet Barboni by a fluke."

General Cialdini was in anything but a happy temper.

"Gentlemen," he said, "advance and capture that fellow."

No one obeyed his summons.

One or two drew their swords, but as Barboni's dagger gleamed in the gaslight, they held back.

"Ten thousand ducats for him, dead or alive," shouted the general.

This large reward stimulated a few, who for honor alone, would not have risked an encounter with the redoubtable chief.

"Hold hard," said Walter Campbell.

The Italian officers looked at him curiously.

"I'm in this," continued the coxswain. "Let me have my innings."

He leveled his pistol at the brigand.

Every eye was fixed on him intently.

"Are you going to give up Jack's wife?" inquired Walter.

There was no answer.

"I shall count one, two, three," he continued, "and if you don't talk up by that time, it will be all up the Baltic with you."

Barboni's mouth curled with a smile.

"One!" said the little coxswain.

The Italians envied him the possession of the pistol.

"Two!"

"Take a good aim and kill the villain; you shall have the reward," said General Cialdini.

He was as much excited as any one else.

"Bother the reward," answered Walter; "it's Jack's wife I want to get back from the thundering thief."

Barboni's arms hung listlessly by his side, and though he held a pistol in each hand, he appeared perfectly indifferent to the result of the shot.

"I've got five lives in this popgun," cried the little coxswain. "So look out, ugly."

Still Barboni made no sign.

He kept his eyes fixed upon the muzzle of the pistol, as if calculating exactly where the bullet was likely to strike.

"Three!"

There was a report.

Barboni just moved his head on one side, about the eighth of an inch, and the bullet swished past, burying itself in the open paneling.

"Missed, by jingo! That's one gone," muttered Walter.

He fired again.

This time the ball struck the brigand in the breast.

He seemed to stagger a little, but remained perfectly upright.

A third time the little coxswain fired.

The ball lodged in the same place.

The fourth was a miss, owing again to a rapid movement of the head.

The fifth discharge was a hit, and in the region of the heart.

"That shot must have cooked his goose!" exclaimed Walter.

"Yes. He's a settled member," said Harvey.

"Bravo!" cried Tom Carden.

"By Jove! he's not touched," cried Jack, as the smoke cleared away.

Barboni was upright and apparently unhurt.

In the presence of all the assembled guests, he took the three bullets which had struck him out of a fold in his cloak.

Tossing them contemptuously to the little coxswain, he cried:

"Take your playthings."

The balls rolled along the polished floor, with a dull, heavy sound.

But they did not roll far, as they were considerably indented.

The Italians crossed themselves devoutly.

"He is in league with the fiend," said the majority.

With a polite bow, Barboni said:

"I am sorry, ladies and gentlemen, to have interrupted your festivities, but I felt it a point of honor to keep my appointment with Mr. Harkaway, whom I esteem so highly."

Again the general urged the members of his staff to attack the brigand.

A few attempted to do so.

"Beware," cried Barboni. "He who comes near me dies."

He leveled his pistols, one in each hand.

"I am tired of childish play," he said; "the comedy is over. I have kept my word. It is for you to say if the tragedy shall begin."

The officers ceased to advance.

"Put up your swords," continued the brigand.

The order was complied with.

"Villain!" cried the general, "you shall pay dearly for this."

"Vi saluta, Barboni!"

The brigand's cry was heard ringing through the saloon once more.

Then he retired behind the screen.

Walter Campbell hurled the pistol after him without effect.

The officers rushed forward and pulled down the screen.

A door was disclosed to view, but it was locked, and defied every effort to open it.

The peculiarly shrill whistle of the brigand chief was heard distinctly.

Those who were looking out of the windows declared they saw a perfect army of dark forms start out of the flower-beds, and from behind trees in the garden.

Barboni did not come unattended.

Naples had a fresh sensation.

News had been very scarce for a long time.

Barboni was a godsend.

The contessa and General Cialdini were trying to put the ladies at their ease.

Carden picked up one of the bullets fired by Walter Campbell and returned by the brigand.

All at once a voice at his elbow said:

"Curiously knocked about, isn't it?"

Tom Carden looked up and saw the Prince di Villanova.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Why not, *caro moi*? Where did you expect me to be? Have I not been an awe-stricken spectator of the visit of that incomprehensible being, Barboni?"

Carden showed him the bullet.

"What do you think of this?" he asked.

"What do you?"

"Barboni wears a coat of strong chain mail. Look, the bullet is almost flat."

"Either that, my dear friend, or he is made of cast iron. I congratulate you on your discovery," replied the prince with a sort of covert sneer.

He walked away, and was quickly seen in conversation with General Cialdini, and his brilliant staff of officers.

The latter were intensely annoyed at the escape of the brigand.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE THREE SPOTS OF BLOOD.

In a short time another attempt was made upon the doors of the ball-room.

They were found to be unguarded.

Every trace of the brigands had disappeared.

They had vanished as if by magic.

Behind the screen was an old disused door communicating by a flight of stairs with the garden.

Jack was the first to discover this.

"By Heaven! he shall not escape me," he exclaimed.

Followed by the three friends, he dashed down the stairs and searched the garden, but the shrubs and trees concealed nothing.

Crest-fallen, he returned to the ball-room.

With the usual light-heartedness of the Neapolitans, the music had again struck up, and the dancers were enjoying themselves.

Ladies ate ices, and fruit plunged in snow, as if nothing had happened.

Gentlemen talked and drank icy cold champagne.

General Cialdini and his staff were the only ones who had gone away.

It was necessary to make inquiries at the gaol, and call out the troops.

Presently the assembly was beaten, and the streets rang with the sound of the drums.

At the prison the gaoler knew nothing whatever.

The cell which had contained Barboni was empty.

It was curious that only one person had seen the Prince of Villanova enter.

This was a servant of the governor, who said he had let him in privately, and opened the door of the cell with his master's key.

Shortly afterwards it was remarked that this man had more money to spare and spend than he ever had before.

He was frequently seen in conversation with Bigamini.

One morning he was found dead in the street, with a dagger in his heart.

But still no suspicion was attached to the Prince of Villanova, who came and went as freely into Naples as ever.

That he should have been at the prison the night of Barboni's escape, was considered only a singular coincidence.

Every one had seen him in the ball-room.

Many had talked to him a few minutes after Barboni had thrown back the bullets at the little coxswain and been lost sight of behind the screen.

Finding that all was gaily once more, the four friends determined to enjoy themselves.

Jack talked to the contessa.

Tom Carden, however, walked about with his arms folded, and sullenly watched the Prince of Villanova.

"This Barboni is becoming quite an interesting creature," said the contessa, fanning herself.

"He's a wonderful fellow," replied Jack. "But I shall give him no rest, for I mean to have my wife back again."

"Ah!" sighed the contessa, "I wish I had some one to love me so dearly."

There was a rustle of muslin behind them, and looking up, they saw Hilda and Miss Lily Cockles.

"How kind of you to come at last. So pleased," said the contessa, extending her well-gloved hand.

"Thanks," answered Hilda. "You are always so good. But do for pity's sake tell us what has happened?"

"Nothing; a scene from a theater, that is all."

"Most alarming reports has reached us."

"Oh, about that dear Barboni. It is so amusing. One of your friends tried to shoot him. He laughs at the bullets, and he's a charmed life."

"Is any one hurt? I feared that something dreadful had happened," said Hilda.

"Fortunately we are all right," answered Jack.

"Barboni has escaped from prison, and had the daring insolence to keep an appointment here he made with me."

"I feel so relieved," said Hilda.

"Take a seat by my side," said the contessa.

Hilda introduced Lily, and just as she had done so, a voice exclaimed:

"May I not also have the honor?"

"Oh, certainly. Lily, let me present the Prince of Villanova to you."

The prince bowed, and Lily's pale face flushed as she thought what a handsome man he was.

Soon Harvey came up, and gave his wife a detailed account of the bold act of the dreaded brigand Barboni.

The prince devoted himself to Lily, with whom he seemed much struck.

"Have you been in Naples long, miss?" he asked.

"Not long. A day or two only," she replied.

"The Harkaways are old friends of yours, I presume?"

"No, not very. We met them here last year."

"We," said the prince. "May I ask if you speak of your family?"

"Yes; my father and brother," answered Lily, casting down her eyes.

"They are with you now, I presume?"

"They are dead."

Lily spoke in a solemn voice, and all the light died out of her pretty eyes.

Villanova saw in a moment that he had been betrayed into one of those mistakes which people often stumble into without meaning it.

"Pardon me a thousand times," he said. "I had no idea I should touch such a painful subject."

"Don't be sorry," replied Lily. "I have tried to bear it bravely, and thought I had become resigned, though I shall never forget when my poor brother—was killed."

"An accident?"

"No; he was murdered!"

The prince positively started, as if the idea of murder was something too terrible for him to dwell upon.

"Ah, me!" cried Lily. "Those were sad days. I did not mean to talk of them any more, but you have made me do so."

"It was entirely unintentional."

"I know it; and now you have heard so much of my history, you may as well know it all."

"It will interest me greatly," replied the prince.

"I fear your Italian politeness induced you to say that," she said, with a half smile.

"On my word it was not that. I have taken an interest in you which I cannot explain, but which I hope sincerely you will forgive."

"Willingly. I am alone in the world now. No one looks after me but my guardians."

"You are not rich, then?"

"I have six thousand a year. My only friends are the Harkaways and the Harveys. It is something new for a stranger to take an interest in me, and since Mrs. Harkaway is in the power of the brigands, I feel as if I had lost my best friend."

"You were like sisters?"

"We loved each other dearly, and I came over here to stay with her," replied Lily. "Do you think Barboni, as they call him, will hurt her?"

"Would it please you to hear that she is in no danger?" asked the prince, smiling.

"Oh, so much."

"Then, believe me, that she is perfectly safe and comfortable, if not happy."

"How can you possibly tell?"

"Because I had an interview this evening with the brigand in his cell to ask him to release Mrs. Harkaway. Her husband is my friend now, although we once had a little quarrel; and cospetto! one must exert himself in the cause of friendship."

"How good of you?"

"Barboni told me that he merely kept her as a sort of hostage, and would give her up at once if all the party will leave Naples."

"Will they not?"

"Well, they have some romantic idea that they can capture Barboni, and have vowed to do so," replied the prince.

"I would give the world to see my dear Emily again."

"Perhaps it can be managed. I will—"

Villanova stopped himself suddenly.

"By the way," he continued, in a little confusion, "you were going to tell me all your troubles. Do not, pray, treat me as a stranger."

"I have little to tell your highness," answered Lily.

"That little I shall be pleased to hear."

"My father died soon after my brother was murdered, and so I am alone in the world; that is all."

"Do you know the murderer?"

"Oh, yes."

"Is he not punished?"

"No; he should be. If we were to meet, because, although I once thought him the perfection of manly beauty, I could never respect the man who slew my brother," said Lily.

"Can you not meet?" asked the prince.

"I fear not; we seem to be like two parallel lines, which may run together, but cannot meet."

"What is the name of this man?" inquired Villanova.

"Lord Augustus Darrel."

The prince started again, and this time so violently that his opera hat fell from his hand on to the floor.

"You have dropped your tile, prince," said Jack, picking it up.

"Thanks, *caro mio*," answered the prince in his soft Italian accent.

Turning to Lily again, he added:

"The scoundrel! Did Darrel really murder your brother? But there is a curse on the race—a deadly curse."

"Let us change the subject, please," said Lily. "It is unexpressibly painful to me."

"With pleasure. Again pardon me."

"Do not mention it."

"May I call at Harkaway's while you are the guest of the English volunteers?" said Villanova.

"Why do you call my friends the English volunteers?" inquired Lily.

"Oh! it is a nickname the Neapolitans have given them because they are doing the work of the police in hunting down Barboni."

"I sincerely trust they may succeed."

"Never—never—never!"

"You speak emphatically," she remarked.

"I do, because I know the man; and I wish they knew Barboni as well as I do."

"It is not an acquaintance to boast of," replied Lily rather sarcastically.

"Perhaps not," answered the prince, with a shrug of the shoulders; "but what would you have? One cannot always choose one's acquaintance in this world, and believe me, Barboni is not so bad as he is painted."

"The wretch! Don't talk to me about him," replied Lily, in disgust.

Tom Carden had been watching the pair for some time.

He came up to Lily, and managed to get between her and the prince.

"You should not talk too much to strangers, Miss Lily," he said.

The prince rose angrily.

"If the lady finds my society disagreeable," he answered, "she can surely tell me so without your intervention."

Carden looked at him.

Suddenly he extended his hand, and pointing to his shirt-front, said:

"Why do you want to quarrel when you seem to be already hurt?"

"Hurt! explain yourself, sir," replied the prince.

"Look at yourself in a glass. Come with me."

Carden drew the prince to the nearest mirror.

If Villanova had started when he heard the name of Darrel, he trembled when he looked at himself in the glass.

What did he see? Three spots of blood.

The marks were distinctly visible on the starched cambric. Three irregular patches of dry blood.

"Anything wrong?" asked Carden.

"I—I had a fall from my horse to-day," answered Villanova, "and was torn about in a hedge, which I fell into; the wounds have broken out again."

Carden hummed a tune.

"Adios!" cried the prince. "I shall look forward to our next meeting."

"One moment, prince," cried Tom Carden, as he was going away.

"Do not detain me. I did not know these marks were here, and must hurry home."

"How many times did my friend, Walter Campbell, hit the brigand?"

"How should I know?"

"You were in the room," said Carden.

"Yes—yes, three times, I think it was."

"And where did the balls strike against his coat of mail?"

"The chest; but why ask such idle questions of me?" said the prince, with a gesture of impatience.

"I only want information. The chest is covered by the linen shirt front, you know, and the indentation of the

shirt of chain mail underneath that by a bullet would break the skin and cause the blood to flow, and—"

"Signor Carden," interrupted the prince, "eight-and-forty hours shall not pass over your head before you bitterly repent these insinuations."

"I am glad you understand what I mean," replied Carden, calmly.

"I know too well what you wish to convey to me; but I tell you the simple truth when I say that I was injured in a fall from my horse, you may believe me or not, as you like."

"I certainly shall exercise my own discretion in doing so."

The prince became livid with rage.

"Santa Maria!" he cried, "you shall answer for this." He stalked away as he spoke these menacing words.

"There goes a villain, but I'll unearth him yet," muttered Carden, in his sturdy, dogged way.

"I say, Tom," said Jack, "we're going home directly."

"Are you?" returned Carden.

"What's got your temper up, you old bear?"

"You can guess."

"The prince again? I saw you talking to him. You've got your deadly knife into Villanova."

"Barboni, you ought to say," answered Carden.

"Perhaps. That is your particular delusion, you know," said Jack, with a laugh. "But you have not proved it yet, have you?"

"No; but I will, by Jove!"

"You shall have a try to-morrow. I am going to pay Villanova more than I can afford, I'm sorry to say, about a bet."

"What did you bet?" asked Carden.

"Simply that Barboni would not keep his appointment."

"If you will make rash bets, my boy, you must pay," answered Carden.

"It's rather awkward just now. I shall have to borrow it from Harvey," said Jack.

"What's that you want from Harvey?" exclaimed Harvey himself, who walked up in time to catch the last words.

"A thousand pounds, Dick. I know it's a lot of money, but—"

"A lot of humbug," interrupted Harvey. "If you wanted ten or twenty thousand, dear Jack, you should have it."

Jack's eyes watered.

"Don't I owe everything to you?" exclaimed Harvey.

"Only a little," replied Jack.

"Didn't you take my part when I was a youngster at school?"

"I tried to."

"And when we were at sea, weren't we pals and shipmates?"

"Rather!"

"And on the desert island and at Oxford, where I should never have gone if it hadn't been for you."

"I was selfish, Dick, not generous," replied Jack.

"Why?"

"Because I liked you, and couldn't part with you."

"Anyhow, you have stuck to me like a brick all through life, as far as it has gone," answered Harvey.

"And we mean to go on sticking together, Dick."

"Of course we do. I owe my marriage to my darling Hilda to you, and if I have more coin now than you, all I can say is, help yourself."

Jack's eyes got moister than ever.

"Is that straight enough, dear old Jack?" cried Harvey.

"Yes—yes, Dick. I know you'd do a lot for me."

"More than a lot, Jack."

"What do you mean?"

"You should have my life, old fellow, if it would do you any good."

Jack took his hand in his.

The two fists met in one of those grand, hearty grasps, which, when two men's eyes are looking into each other's, mean so much more than words.

"There's an open cheque for you to-morrow morning," said Harvey. "Fill it up for what you like. I think we understand one another, Jack?"

"You haven't asked me what the bet's about," replied Jack.

"I wouldn't take such a liberty."

"Why?"

"You can bet without asking me, can't you?" said Harvey.

"There is nothing secret about it, though. It was only a thousand with Villanova that Barboni would not keep his appointment."

"If I were you I wouldn't pay," said Carden.

"Must, dear boy," answered Harvey. "It's a debt of honor."

"That fellow has no honor! He's Barboni."

The young men burst out laughing.

"That was always your idea," said Harvey.

"And it is firmer than ever now."

"It got Jack a shot in the shoulder."

"Did you see the spots of blood?" asked Carden.

"No; what about them?"

Carden related what he had seen on the shirt front of the Prince of Villanova.

"Now I mean to say," he replied, "that those blood marks were produced by Walter Campbell's three shots!"

"All rot—excuse me for saying so," replied Harvey.

"None so blind as those who won't see," said Carden. "But you'll all wake up some of these fine mornings, and say I'm right."

CHAPTER XVII.

"CAN IT BE?—NO, IT CAN'T!—YES, IT IS!"

The cool air blew in through the open windows of the ball-room, laden with a thousand perfumes.

At present the guests did not show any inclination to depart.

"Don't go yet, Jack," said the little coxswain. "This

is the jolliest part of the twenty-four hours."

"You'd dance all night and sleep all day," replied Jack.

"Not a bad plan, either, in this hot place."

"Go and make yourself useful, and send a waiter with some ices—the ladies want some; and look here, we must go in half an hour. There is work to be done to-morrow."

"Brigand hunting?"

"You've just hit it."

"That's your sort," cried the little coxswain. "I'm off like a shot."

He went in search of a waiter, and found one with a tray of ices.

"Take those things over there," he said, pointing to Jack's party, "and look sharp, or I pity you."

"Yes, sir," replied the waiter.

"Oh, you're English, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I need not have wasted my small stock of Italian over you."

"No, sir."

"Don't stand there, yessing and no-sir-ring, or I'll give you a toe-biter which will make you alter your tune," said the little coxswain, in his usual overbearing manner.

A sickly hue overspread the face of the waiter, who made no answer.

"Off you go—trot," said Walter.

The waiter shuffled away with the tray.

He was a man past middle age, with a thin, sunburnt face, and an air of long suffering about him. He wore whiskers, but no beard or moustache. His tail coat was rather the worse for wear, and evidently borrowed, as it did not fit him; a white tie, white stockings and plush knee-breeches, completed his singular half-and-half sort of livery.

It was clear that he was one of those supernumeraries who are "put on" for the evening, and may be seen at all large parties.

When he reached Jack, he said: "Ices, sir?" and then stood staring as if he had seen a ghost.

"Hand them around, my good fellow," said Jack.

The knees of the waiter seemed to shake and tremble. His tray shook dreadfully; and the ice glasses knocked together as if subjected to a slight shock of earthquake.

"Do you hear?" said Jack, angrily. "Don't stand staring there like a stuck pig."

The waiter's lips moved, but nothing came from them.

He was trying to speak. His agitation, however, was too much for him.

Again he made an effort.

"Name of Harkaway, sir?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Commonly called Jack Harkaway, of St. Aldate's, Oxford."

"The same," replied Jack, returning his stare with evident surprise.

The waiter was standing in front of the contessa, and losing all command over himself, he let the tray drop at one end.

About a dozen and a half glasses of delicious cool ices rushed down the inclined plane.

Many landed in the bosom of the contessa.

As she wore a very low dress, the result was not equable to her feelings.

She uttered a piercing shriek.

"Oh, the wretch!" she said. "Turn him out, discharge him. Oh! help! I am freezing to death! Ugh!"

She shuddered convulsively.

Lily and Hilda rushed to her assistance.

Jack arose and grasped the clumsy attendant by the collar.

"You careless hound," he said. "I've a jolly good mind and a half to chuck you out of the nearest window."

"Oh, Lord!" said the waiter. "He does not know me! How many more indignities am I to suffer?"

Something struck Jack as being familiar in the man's voice.

Letting go his hold, he took a good look at him.

"Can it be?—No, it can't!—Yes, it is!" he stammered.

"Yes—yes," said the man. "In this menial attire—in these cast-off garments of a hired servant, you behold the unfortunate friend of your boyhood, the youthful instructor of your tender mind."

The tray dropped to the ground with a loud bang.

Springing up on his long weedy legs, the waiter extended his bony arms and cast them around Jack's neck.

"Embrace your Mole," he said, in a broken voice.

"By Jove!" said Jack; "wonders will never cease. Who would have thought of seeing you here, Mr. Mole? But I am heartily glad."

"I knew it when I saw you, and felt that I had reached a haven of rest."

Jack gently disengaged his arms.

"Give me your hand, old friend," he said, extending his own.

They met in a cordial grasp.

"Embrace your Mole once more."

"Excuse me, please, it's too hot."

"There was a time—but no matter. Times change, and we change with them."

"What have you been doing?" asked Jack, who could scarcely refrain from laughing at the strange figure he cut.

"My adventures are a complete Odyssey, and it seemed as if misfortune and I were as safe to travel together as that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles."

"You went away to be governor of Limbi?"

"I did, but the beasts wanted to eat me."

"To which you naturally objected."

"I did, and came away with my family," replied Mr. Mole.

"Where are they?"

"Our ship was wrecked on the Italian coast, and all perished but myself. My property was lost, and I tramped to Naples a beggar."

"How long have you been here," said Jack.

"Nearly a month, getting odd jobs occasionally, and to-night I was engaged as a waiter by the major-domo of the contessa, who dressed me up as you see. May the leprosy of Naaman cling to him and his forever."

"I say, Mr. Mole," cried Jack, "Don't be vicious."

"Misfortune has soured me, Harkaway. That major-domo has trampled on my feelings."

"How?"

"In this house there is plenty of good liquor."

"And he wouldn't give you any, I suppose. Quite right, too."

"Hear me. Is it not written: 'You shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn?'" said Mole.

"Yes."

"Well, here have I been toiling all the evening, and had nothing to refresh me but a few brandy cherries some ladies left at the bottom of their glasses."

"It's a hard case. Come and have a bottle of fiz," said Jack.

Mr. Mole seized his hand with both of his.

"Harkaway, you are my friend," he said.

"I hope so."

"You're a fine fellow."

"That is a matter of opinion."

"Embrace your Mole—do."

"Turn it up," answered Jack. "So much of that business won't wash. It looks odd, and your coat's greasy."

"He won't embrace his Mole," said the latter, turning away with a suppressed sob.

Harvey happened to look around, and, seeing Jack in close conversation with a waiter, was astonished.

"Palling up with slaveys," he said, "That's a new game, isn't it?"

"He says he knew you when you were a kid," replied Jack.

"Knew me?"

"Yes; and you were the biggest rip he ever met with."

"It's like his cheek! What does he mean by it?" said Harvey, angrily.

"Come and ask him."

"Do you say you knew me years ago?" he asked, approaching Mole.

"I did, Harvey, and I am sorry to say I never knew any good of you," replied Mr. Mole.

"Why, you thundering old humbug, I've a good mind to kick you!"

"I've had more kicks than half pence since I left Mr. Crawcour's select academy."

"Who is it, Jack?" inquired Harvey, puzzled.

"Thing that burrows in the dark."

"What?"

"Don't you twig?"

"By Jove! It's Mole. I know him now. So you've turned up again, sir," exclaimed Harvey.

"I have."

"This isn't kind of you," said Harvey. "We all thought you were decently drowned at sea, and mourned you as a settled member."

"You mourned me?"

"We wept for you. You shouldn't do such things."

"What things?" asked Mole.

"Coming to life again and startling fellows. It's wrong. Go and die again, do."

"Harvey," said Mr. Mole, "If I thought those were your real sentiments, I would seek—"

"Shake hands, you old duffer. It's only my chaff," interrupted Harvey.

He saw that Mr. Mole was really pained.

"Can't you take a joke?" he added.

"Yes," said Mr. Mole; "but I can't stand being called names, addressed familiarly. 'I am poor and in distress, and have lost my all; yet I ought to command your respect.'"

"You shall have it, sir. To us you will always be the same Mr. Mole, and while we have anything, you shall never want a home or a friend; eh, Jack?"

"Right, Dick. Just what I was going to say."

"Mr. Mole's eyes filled with tears."

"My dear boys, God bless you."

God bless you! was all he could say.

The contessa had gone away in a moist condition, and most of the guests began to take their departure.

Hilda and Lily were ready to go.

Mr. Mole was introduced to them, and they all went home together, apartments being provided for Mole, whom a tailor the next day fitted out with ready-made clothes, such as suited his appearance.

The next day a council of war was held, and it was determined to take a party of soldiers and search again for the brigands. General Cialdina willingly let them have a company.

When Mr. Mole heard of the brigands, and that Emily was held in captivity by them, he became very valorous.

"Lead me against these Amalekites," he said. "Have I not wielded the sword in former times?"

"You shall come, sir," replied Jack.

Horses were provided for them, and they were to meet the soldiers, who had been sent on in front, on the other side of the Volturno.

Monday was delighted to see Mr. Mole again, and asked him a multitude of questions about Limbi.

They had spent two hours together before breakfast.

As Mr. Mole got on his horse, he rolled off the other side.

"Hold up, sir," exclaimed Jack.

"It's the sun, Harkaway; I feel a little giddy," answered Mr. Mole.

"You've been in the sun, I think," remarked Jack.

"No, not a drop of anything has passed my lips. No—no, Harkaway; you must make some allowance for my emotion at being among old friends again."

Monday appeared with a little cask to be slung over the back.

"Here you are, Mist' Mole," he exclaimed; "catch hold, sare."

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Only my water cask," replied Mr. Mole.

"Oh! is that all?"

"Yes; on my word, there is nothing more."

Mr. Mole slung the cask over his shoulders, and gathered up the reins.

"I feel as if I should kill brigands to-day," he said; "in fact, several brigands, eh! Mr. Campbell?"

"The more the better," answered the little coxswain.

Beckoning Monday to his side, Jack said in a low tone:

"What's Mole got in that cask?"

"Water, sare."

"If you tell me a lie, I'll break your neck, you old bag of soot."

"You hear him say it am full of um water, sare."

Jack raised his whip.

"Speak the truth, or—"

"Well, it am whisky, sare. He make friends with me, and I give it him out of um pantry," replied Monday.

"All right," said Jack, adding aloud, "now, gentlemen, are you ready?"

The reply being in the affirmative, they started for a brisk ride.

There was bloody work before them, though they did not suspect its near approach.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CARDEN CHALLENGES THE BRIGAND.

THE little party did not halt until they came to the sybil's cave, where they drew bridle.

A small rill, which trickled down the rocks, and, after filling a little basin, disappeared in the earth, enabled them to water their horses.

The poor beasts were much distressed.

Nor were their riders better off.

The heat of the sun was intense, and a draught of the cool fresh water was as agreeable to them as to their steeds.

Mr. Mole applied his lips to his cask, and drew a deep sigh.

"What have we here?" he asked, "caves?"

"Yes, and witches," answered Harvey.

"Ah! dear me; I thought witches were an exploded idea. Why not burn a few, as an example to the rest?"

"There is but one," said Jack, "and we suspect her of being an accomplice of the brigands."

"By all means put her to the test."

"We are men, not savages," replied Jack, "and we can't ill-use an old woman."

This response was applauded by the rest of the party.

Leaving the sybil unmolested, they remounted their horses, and cantering on, did not draw rein until they reached the Volturno.

They crossed the rapid river in the ferry-boat, and proceeded to the place where they had appointed to meet the soldiers.

Here they only found a picket.

The officer in command stated that they had fallen in with a band of brigands.

A fight had ensued.

The brigands were beaten back by the soldiers and fled, being pursued to within a short distance of Castle Inferno.

Here they had suddenly vanished, as if they had gone into the earth.

The commander was waiting till Mr. Harkaway and his friends came up, not knowing exactly what to do.

Jack pressed forward on hearing this news.

He found the main body of the soldiers lying on their arms, under the shelter of some trees.

The commander at once came up to Jack.

"We surprised the rascals, some twenty in number," he said, "and poured in a hot fire."

"That's right," said Jack, rubbing his hands.

"Six fell dead; the remainder fled, and we followed them to this spot."

"What became of them?"

"That is more than I can tell. Per Baccho! these fellows are not like an open enemy; they seemed to sink into the rocks yonder."

"No doubt," said Jack, thoughtfully, "they have some caves close at hand. May I offer you some advice?"

"Certainly," answered the officer.

"Throw out some men as sentinels, and keep a good watch."

"I have already done so."

"The scoundrels," cried Jack, "cannot be far off; men do not vanish like smoke."

"Santissima Virgine," cried the officer, "I think they are in league with Satan himself."

"Not they. You will find them as much mortal as yourself, and I hope we shall soon be able to give a good account of them," said Jack.

He rejoined his friends, who had dismounted; their horses cropping the rich grass while they were reclining under the trees, and looking up at the ridge of tur佐-covered rocks in front.

About a quarter of a mile beyond the rocks arose the gloomy and forbidding towers of Castle Inferno.

"What's the next move?" asked Harvey.

"I am going to visit the prince in the castle."

"Take care he doesn't bag you."

"No danger. I don't fear the prince; it is Barboni from whom treachery may be expected."

"Are we to wait till you come back?" asked Carden.

"Yes; I won't be long. Keep a lookout for brigands; they are close at hand," said Jack. "Look well to your arms or they will be down on you before you know it."

"Cut along," replied Carden.

Jack told his friends all he had heard from the commander of the soldiers.

"It is something to have run them to earth. The place must be thoroughly explored," remarked Harvey.

"When I come back."

"All right; we'll not be idle while you are gone."

"I shall stick under these trees," said the little coxswain; "it is so sweltering hot."

"Keep the young man out of danger, Carden," said Jack, "and watch ole Mole."

"Why?"

"He's got that barrel thing full of whiskey."

"The mean beggar; he's never offered us a drop. I'll be on him, never fear," said the little coxswain.

Jack explained the object of his absence to the commanding officer, and started on foot for the castle.

"No sooner had he gone than Carden said:

"We'll have a lark with Mole."

"I'll help you," answered Harvey.

"Mr. Mole," cried Carden.

"Sir, to you," was the answer.

Mr. Mole was lying down at the trunk of the tree, nicely shaded, and enjoying a cigarette.

"Give me a snip out of your water cask."

"Don't disturb me," replied Mole; "there's a good fellow. I'm lying *sub tegmine fagi*, as we used to say at school."

"Don't get up; I'll fetch the cask, sir."

"I—I don't know where it is."

"Oh, what a crammer," said Harvey. "It's under your head."

"So it is," said Mole, in apparent surprise.

"Do you mean to say that you didn't know that?"

"I didn't, indeed I!"

"Humbug!"

"Absence of mind, Harvey. Think of the trouble I've gone through lately, and the responsibility again thrown on my hands of having to look after you youngsters."

Harvey advanced and took up the cask in spite of Mr. Mole's protests.

"It's empty, Harvey," he said.

"Empty!"

"Yes, put it down again."

"You can't have drunk it all."

"It leaks."

Harvey put the bung-hole to his lips.

"Why, hang it all! it's whiskey," he said.

"Nonsense," said Mole, blankly.

"It is, though."

"Bless that fellow Monday," said Mole, with affected indignation.

"Why?"

"I told him to put water in it, and he's filled it with whiskey; it's too bad. I don't like such practical jokes, and I'll tell him so, too; he ought not to trifle with a man of my age, in every way his superior."

Carden and Harvey burst out laughing.

"The old un can do it," said Walter Campbell, with a wink.

"I suppose you didn't taste the difference, sir?" said Harvey.

"No; I merely sipped it once, and—and there is a mistake somewhere. I'll go and look for brigands."

"Mr. Mole was in some confusion, and walked off towards the rocks.

He had not proceeded far before a shot was heard.

Mole rushed back in a hurry, holding his straw hat in his hand.

The bullet had torn part of the brim off.

"They're on us," he cried wildly. "The battle has begun. Give it them, my brave boys. I will direct your fire. Remember the Pisangs. Up, guards—I mean up, boys, and at 'em."

With this harrangue on his lips, he climbed up a tree with some difficulty, and sitting on a bough, surveyed the scene below with his usual complacency.

He had not forgotten to take his whiskey cask with him. Applying its bung to his lips every now and then, he continued to shout:

"Give it the wretches—sip—I can see them—gurgle. Shoot every man Jack of them—sip. They'll fly when they see me—suck—I'm the man for brigands—sip. Hurrah for Oxford!—gurgle."

Tom Carden took up the cry.

"Hurrah for Oxford!" he said.

"Give a little one in for Cambridge," said the little coxswain.

"Right you are, my tulip. Hurrah for Cambridge!" said Carden.

"What's to be done?" said Harvey. "There the brigands are, sure enough."

"We've treed them, and it is something to have got at their burrow," said Carden.

"Who'll go in and smoke them out?" asked Harvey.

"Not I," cried the little coxswain. "I'm no mug at a fair. Old Mole's been shot at, and as they are hidden, it is certain death."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Carden.

"What, old beans?" inquired Harvey.

"I'll tie a white rag on the end of a stick, and get on that billock."

"I can't see the use of that."

"Do you think if I challenge the brigand to single combat, he'll come out?"

"Not he."

"I'll try it on anyhow. Jack's talking to the prince, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, if Barboni comes out and answers my challenge, it follows that the Prince of Villanova and Barboni can't be in two places at once."

"Of course not."

"It will settle the question of identity at once."

"So it will. Go in and win, old son," cried Harvey.

Carden quickly tore down a bough, stripped it of leaves and twigs, and fastened a white handkerchief to the end.

Waving it in the air, he climbed up a small hillock.

"I, Tom Carden, captain of the Oxford eight, challenge Barboni to single combat; and let the best man win."

He uttered this in a loud voice.

There was no reply.

The brigands, wherever they were, so far respected the flag as to refrain from firing at him.

"If Barboni refuses this challenge," cried Carden, "I shall brand him as a coward, and I give him fifteen minutes to answer it in."

The challenge was delivered in Italian, and the soldiers uttered a loud hurrah.

Tom sat leisurely down on the hillock, and filling his pipe, lighted it with a fusee, and smoked calmly.

At the same time he took out his watch and contemplated the hands.

"Bet you a bob," said Harvey, "he don't show up."

"Odds he does," replied the little coxswain.

"Bravo, Carden," said Mr. Mole, from his perch: "you're a brave fellow. Oxford forever."

"Hullo!"

This exclamation was caused by his losing his seat and falling to the ground.

He was only a little shaken, and picked himself up directly, amidst loud laughter.

"Tight already, sir!" said Harvey.

"No, Harvey, not tight."

"What then?"

"It's a dodge of the rascally brigands; they've greased all the boughs of the trees."

"I'd give them something for it, sir, if I were you."

"So I will," answered Mole, who was made valliant by the whiskey.

He advanced recklessly toward the ridge of rocks.

"Haul him back," said Carden, "do you want him to get killed?"

The little coxswain ran after him, and pulled him back.

"Why this violence?" he asked.

"It's dangerous, and we don't want to lose you."

"Bear witness, all of you," said Mr. Mole, "that I am no coward. Harvey is afraid of those brigands, but I am not. I have set him and all of you an example of bravery. Where's my cask?"

He suffered himself to be taken to a safe place, and presently a gentle gurgle came from the bunghole of the cask.

"Brigands!" he said in contempt. "What are brigands to Pisangs! Ha! ha! we have fought Pisangs, Harvey, with Hunston at their head!"

"Yes, sir," replied Harvey, "and we licked them, too."

"We are bound to lick everything. But Hunston was a teaser. The brigands haven't got Hunston?"

"It is not very likely."

"Ten minutes gone," said Carden from his hillock.

"Barboni won't show up," remarked Harvey.

The soldiers roused themselves from the apathy into which the heat of the sun had plunged them.

Sentinels paced slowly up and down, keeping guard outside the little camp.

The officers gathered together in a little knot, talked and smoked, looking as if they did not like the duty which had been given them.

They were placed under Jack Harkaway's orders, however, by General Cialdini, and for that day they were obliged to do what he told them.

In their hearts they liked the brigands better than they did the English.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TELEGRAM.

Jack made his way quickly to the castle in which Prince Villanova resided.

He found the drawbridge down as before, and the same absence of bustle and ostentation.

Passing through the courtyard he met a servant, who at once conducted him to the prince's study.

His highness was reading a newspaper, published in Naples, which gave an account of the escape of Barboni.

He arose instantly, and welcomed Jack in the most cordial manner.

Jack had obtained bank notes for Harvey's cheque, and laid them on the table.

"That will make us quits," he said.

"Oh, yes. I'd quite forgotten our little wager of last night. Many thanks. You will stay a little while with me, will you not?"

"I cannot remain long," said Jack.

"Have you business to attend to?"

"Yes, I am brigand hunting, as usual."

"Per Baccho," laughed the prince, "you seem to have but one idea in life."

"For the present I have only one, and that is to bring Barboni to justice."

"Forget him for a time. Let us smoke a cigar and drink some iced wine. It is not often I get the privilege of talking to a well-bred, well-read Englishman like yourself."

Jack bowed.

"Have you been in England?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, years ago. By-the-way, are your friends with you?"

"They are not far off."

"Will you not ask them to honor my poor house with their presence?"

"Thank you; they are otherwise engaged," answered Jack.

He did not say that they were watching for the brigands to appear, and had a force of soldiers with them.

Villanova ordered some wine and cigars to be brought, and he endeavored to interest Jack in conversation.

While they were thus engaged, we must take a peep into a little room, a short distance from the prince's study.

There sat a man before a plain deal-table, the table and the chair constituting the sole furniture of the carpetless apartment.

This man was Bigamini.

Before him, fixed against the bare wall, was a small dial.

On its face were printed the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, like the figures on a clock.

In its center, was a hand or needle, lying motionless.

Bigamini never took his eyes off this dial.

Suddenly there was a sharp noise.

Click! click!

He seized a pen and prepared to write on a piece of paper which he had before him.

The dial was the face of a telegraphic apparatus.

He was about to read off a telegram.

Quickly the needle flew from one letter to another, Bigamini marking each one, until a sudden click announced that the work was completed.

When the needle had stood still, this was what Bigamini had written down:

"Harkaway's friends and a company of soldiers are blockading entrance to cave. Carden has just challenged Barboni to show himself in fifteen minutes, to fight in single combat. Waiting instructions. HUNSTON."

Bigamini rang a little bell.

Scarcely had its gentle tinkle, tinkle died away when a servant entered.

Folding what he had written, he put it in an envelope.

"Take this," he said, "to your master."

The attendant bowed.

"It admits of no delay."

The servant went away with the missive, and delivered it to the prince.

"A letter," said the latter. "Have I your permission, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Certainly; don't mind me," said Jack.

The prince read the contents of the envelope.

Not a muscle of his countenance moved.

He smiled blandly.

"How unfortunate!" he said.

"Why so?" asked Jack.

"It is a letter on business from my lawyer, requiring an immediate reply."

"Answer it, then."

"It may take me a little time."

"Never mind."

"I have to consult documents."

"By all means consult them."

"You are very kind. May I hope you will be able to amuse yourself for half an hour?"

"Oh, yes."

"If you feel bored at the idea, I will put it off," said Villanova.

"I will not hear of such a thing," said Jack.

"Thank you very much. You will find all your favorite English authors on those shelves."

"I shall be all right."

"Is the champagne cup to your liking?"

"Yes."

"And the cigars?"

"Are excellent," replied Jack.

"Then I leave you for a short time, with an easy conscience."

The prince quitted the study, and Jack, taking up a book, began to read.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SINGLE COMBAT.

TOM CARDEN continued to look at his watch with some impatience.

"Time's up," he said, at last.

"The jolly old brigand doesn't mean to show," said the little coxswain.

Suddenly a loud voice was heard.

"Mr. Carden, I am at your service."

This was what it said.

Tom looked in the direction from which the voice proceeded.

Standing in front of a row of bushes was a figure which every one instantly recognized as Barboni.

Three score rifles were leveled at him in a moment.

"Hold!" cried Carden.

The commander of the troops looked toward him.

"I have challenged the brigand to single combat," cried Carden. "Make your men lower their rifles at once; this is treachery; remember we are English born."

Reluctantly the officer gave the command.

Barboni, the brigand, spoke again.

"I trust to the good faith of an English gentleman, Mr. Carden," he said.

"You could not trust to anything better," was the reply.

"I am sure I am in good hands with an Oxford man.

Here are two swords. Will the weapons suit you?"

"They will do as well as anything else," cried Carden.

"He walked towards the brigands, who descended the rock, and stood in an open space.

"Back!" said Carden. "Let no one come within a hundred yards.

The command was obeyed, with but one exception.

Mr. Mole came up in a tottering manner.

"Just take one sip out of my cask, Carden," he said. "It will enable you to annihilate the brigand."

"If I can't fight without whiskey, my dear sir, I can't fight at all," replied Tom.

"That's a shut up for you, sir," said Harvey, as Mr. Mole went back.

"All the better, Harvey; there is more for me; but I thought I would do the generous thing," answered Mr. Mole.

Barboni's lips parted.

The terrible whistle of which we have so often spoken escaped from them.

Instantly the rocks were alive with the forms of brigands, who seemed to have sprung out of the earth.

They outnumbered the soldiers.

"Pardon me," said Barboni, "for this display of my power."

"It was unnecessary, as far as I am concerned," answered Carden.

"It is not that I fear, but my own countrymen and you will not blame me for looking after myself."

"Certainly not."

"Choose your weapon, sir."

Barboni handed Carden two swords of equal length. Tom took one.

He bent it over his knee and found it flexible.

"On guard," cried Barboni; time presses."

Carden put himself in position, and the swords clashed in the salute.

"Sa! ha!" cried the brigand.

The combatants faced one another, with eyes fixed on each other's movements.

Swiftly flashed the swords, without any wound being inflicted.

"Ha! I have you there," cried Carden, making a thrust.

But the brigand stepped back, and the sword's point only grazed his shoulder.

It was evident from the first that Barboni was the more accomplished swordsman of the two,

In vain Carden tried to break down his guard.

He could not succeed.

With a dexterity that was marvelous Barboni parried every thrust, and, at length, with a twist of the wrist, sent his adversary's sword flying in the air.

A shout arose from the brigands.

Carden stood defenseless before his enemy.

"Strike," he said; "a brave man doesn't fear death."

Barboni courteously lowered his sword.

"It is my right to kill you, since I have conquered," he said.

"Exercise your right; though I could have wished to die by a worthier hand."

"No; you are free to depart."

"Free!" cried Carden, who did not expect such generosity.

"Go, sir," answered Barboni; "and remember that you owe the brigand a life."

"I shall not forget it," said Carden.

He walked back to his friends with a crestfallen air.

The little coxswain had been greatly excited during this affair. His rage knew no bounds when he saw Carden beaten.

"Hi!" he said, "you brigand swell! You mountain robber!"

Barboni turned and regarded him sternly.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"Come and fight me. I'm not afraid of you. Pistols for two and a coffin for one, you know that style of thing."

"I do not fight with children. I am no chicken butcher," replied Barboni.

The little coxswain retired in disgust.

"Hang his cheek!" he muttered. "I should like to paint that ugly mug of his."

Barboni retired within a knoll and was joined by Darrelli, who asked for orders.

"Retire with your men to the hills," said Barboni; "you must not let the soldiers suspect the existence of the cave."

"Shall we pour a volley now?"

"By no means; I do not want to exasperate the troops. Lead off your men, throwing them out in order of skirmishers."

"I understand," replied Darrelli.

"If attacked, defend yourselves, and come back here when the pursuit is over."

With these words, Barboni sank through a hole in the rock, which was partly covered with brushwood and grass.

He dropped into a vaulted chamber.

A brigand was awaiting him with a torch.

"Lead on," said Barboni.

He descended half-a-dozen steps and entered a subterranean passage, in the devious windings of which he was soon lost to sight.

The brigands, meanwhile, had deployed into the open plain.

This maneuver was seen by the commander of the soldiers, who gave instant chase to them.

"Shall we go after them?" asked Harvey.

"Some one must wait for Harkaway," replied Carden.

"Suppose you stay with Mole?"

"Very well. You and Walter can join in the pursuit," answered Carden.

They looked to their arms, and mounting their horses, rode after the soldiers.

A dropping fire was sustained between the two parties, which did little or no damage.

The troops were half-hearted in the pursuit, and all the brigands wanted was to get away.

Carden threw himself on the ground and lighted his pipe, while Mr. Mole, hugging his cask tightly, watched the two bodies of men popping away at each other in the plain below.

"You have missed a splendid opportunity," he remarked. "It was lucky for the brigand he had not me to tackle."

"He knows a trick or two of fencing," replied Carden.

"What you want is to meet skill with skill. Harkaway will tell you that I have slain thousands in battle. You have courage, but no skill. Rowing in a boat does not make a soldier."

"Don't worry me, there's a good fellow," said Carden. "I'm rather down in the mouth."

Mr. Mole subsided, and applying himself to his cask, was soon so overcome by heat and whiskey that he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FOUR FRIENDS MAKE NO PROGRESS

It seemed to Jack that when the prince returned he had not been absent more than twenty minutes.

Looking at his watch, he found that the actual time was half an hour.

"Have I kept you waiting?" asked Villanova, with his most pleasant smile.

"Not in the least; the time seems to have slipped away most pleasantly," answered Jack.

"Can I tempt you to stay to dinner?"

"Pray excuse me; my friends are waiting. I was only anxious to get out of your debt."

"Let me walk a little way with you?"

"With pleasure."

Jack took another pull at the champagne cup, and putting on his hat, they sallied forth together.

The same stillness was remarkable in the courtyard of the castle.

A stableman was lazily grooming a horse, a gardener carried some vegetables to the kitchen, the fowls and pigeons routed about a manure-heap with the pigs, and the solitude of a country house was everywhere noticeable.

Side by side they crossed some grassy meadows, which led them to the spot where Carden and Mole were awaiting their coming.

At their approach, Carden sprang up.

He looked surprised to see the prince, who extended his hand.

"Excuse me," said Carden, "but I cannot shake you by the hand."

"As you please," replied the prince, stiffly.

"It is as well to be straightforward."

"Certainly."

"I make no secret of my dislike and suspicion of you. I have accused you of certain things, and I live in the hope of tearing the mask from your face."

Villanova shrugged his shoulders.

"What does your friend mean, Mr. Harkaway?" he said:

"Something has put him out. What is it old fellow?"

Carden made no reply.

Mole, aroused by the sound of voices, woke up, and catching the last words, said;

"I'll answer the question for him. He has been shamefully beaten in a single combat by the brigand chief, who disarmed him, and generously spared his life."

"Is this so?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied Carden, sulkily.

"Did you challenge Barboni?"

"I did, and we fought, with the result Mr. Mole has given you. Now let me ask you a question."

"By all means."

"Have you and the prince been together all the time?"

"With the exception of a short while. His highness received a letter from his lawyer, and he went into another room to answer it," said Jack.

Tom Carden looked puzzled.

"I'm blessed if I can make it out," he said.

"Where are Harvey and Campbell?" inquired Jack.

"Gone with the soldiers after the brigands, who showed in force and retreated. Can't you hear the firing?"

The sharp but distant crack of the rifles was heard in the distance.

"I wish those brigands could be exterminated," remarked the prince. "It is extremely unpleasant for me that they should come so near my castle."

"Humbug," muttered Carden, through his clinched teeth.

"To some extent they compromise you," said Jack.

"How?"

"They are supposed to take refuge on your estate."

"Not with my knowledge or consent, nor do I see where they could hide. I will add this thousand pounds you have given me this morning to the reward the government has offered for the capture of Barboni."

"Bravo!" said Jack; "that is indeed princely."

"Will you tell General Cialdini so with my compliments?"

"Gladly."

"And now, good-bye. I shall look forward to our next meeting," said the prince.

"Is that a friend of yours, Harkaway?" asked Mr. Mole.

"I consider him so."

Mole arose, and with a staggering walk, approached the prince.

"Have a suck out of my cask?" he exclaimed.

"No, thank you, I am not thirsty," replied the prince.

"Not thirsty in this country? I'm always dry. If you won't drink, embrace your Mole."

He was about to throw his arms around him, when his foot slipped, and he fell on his face.

"It's very odd. What an effect the sun has in this country on me!" he observed. "Bother the sun!"

His cask was by his side.

Drawing it to him he pressed it to his waistcoat, and murmured fondly:

"Embrace your Mole."

With a careless nod to Carden, Villanova took his leave, and was soon lost to sight among the trees and hillocks.

Harkaway and Carden told Mole to await their return, and strolled arm-in-arm in the direction of the firing.

"My dear Tom," said Jack, "you must see the folly of suspecting the prince by this time."

"I don't," replied Carden.

"Now, listen to reason. How could Villanova, in his castle, know that you had challenged Barboni, and, supposing him to be Barboni, how could he come and fight you and be back again with me in little over a quarter of an hour?"

"It licks me to make it out," said Carden; "but I've got a deadly knife into that fellow."

"What for?"

"I believe him to be a brigand in disguise."

They walked some distance in silence.

Before they had got far, Harvey and the little coxswain came up at a gallop.

"What luck?" asked Jack.

"None at all. We have killed a dozen of the beggars, and they have done as much for our side," replied Harvey.

"Where are they now?"

"They have taken refuge in the hills."

"Won't they show fight?"

"Not they."

"What of the soldiers?"

"They've turned it up in disgust and gone home. The captain said it was no use exposing his men's lives in this hill fighting, which would be all in favor of Barboni and his men."

"Perhaps he is right. We had best turn tail too for today," said Jack.

"There seems to be no getting at this Barboni," said Harvey, with a tone of vexation.

"It's like fighting a shadow," remarked the little coxswain.

"Because you don't go the right way to work," said Carden.

"How do you mean?" asked all three, in a breath.

"Villanova's the substance, Barboni's the shadow."

"Now, look here," exclaimed Jack; "I'll show you how absurd that is."

"He related the fact of his being with the prince all the morning with the exception of a brief space."

"So," he added, "you see Tom's wrong. A man can't be in two places at once, can he?"

"Not likely," answered Harvey.

"And as to the brigands being hidden on the prince's estate, I will say two things," Jack went on.

"What are they?" asked Carden.

"Firstly, would he offer a thousand pounds reward for the capture of himself and his own men?"

"Secondly, would the brigands retire to the hills some miles off, if they could burrow in a secret cave close by?"

"I have my own ideas," replied Carden, "and I'll stick to them. It is my opinion that the solution of the problem is close at hand."

"For my part," added Harvey, "I think Barboni is to be hunted down in the mountains over there."

"I fancy he's to be met with in the sybil's cave," remarked the little coxswain.

"I think," said Jack, "that we are on the wrong track, and that his headquarters are at Torre del Greco, at the base of Mount Vesuvius, where several robberies have taken place lately."

"Gentlemen," said Carden, "let us all set out to-morrow morning separately, and pursue our explorations in our own manner."

"Hear, hear!" cried all.

"Let Harvey explore the mountains, Harkaway the base of Vesuvius, Walter Campbell the sybil's cave, and I myself will take the ground about the Prince de Villanova's castle."

"Right you are," cried Jack. "Let us hope we shall meet again alive, and free from the brigand's treachery."

Carden still continued to unfold his plans.

"No one," said he, "shall be absent in search of the brigand more than five days. If, after the expiration of that time, any one of us is missing, those who have returned shall think something has happened to him, and go in search."

"Agreed, agreed," said every one.

"I think that's a very sensible proposition," said Mr. Mole; "and as danger may be apprehended in your absence, I will stop at home and mind the ladies."

There was a laugh at this.

After a little more conversation, the party mounted their horses and returned to Naples.

All were fully determined to adopt Carden's plans without delay.

The confinement to which she was subjected in the brigand's cave caused Emily to grow pale.

Neither by night nor day was she allowed to breathe the fresh air.

In addition to this, her anxiety respecting her own fate, and that of her husband and his friends, was a constant worry to her.

For some time past, as we know, she had been in weak health.

Her captivity rendered her low and nervous.

She drooped like a lily on its stem, when the first frost of winter has touched it with its blighted hand.

Occasionally she saw Barboni, Hunston, and Darrel, who all treated her with the utmost politeness.

Every delicacy of the table she could wish for was brought her.

Iced wines and fruits stood constantly on a table in her prison.

She had all she wanted but her liberty and the society of Jack.

Shortly after Harkaway's last visit to Castle Inferno, Hunston knocked at the door of the cavern in which she was.

"Come in," she said.

He entered, holding a bunch of rare flowers in his hand.

"Pardon me, Emily," he said, "if I have disturbed you."

"I am your prisoner," she answered, "and I suppose if I objected to your freedom in calling me Emily, it would be of little use."

"Mrs. Harkaway, then."

"As I am Harkaway's wife, and can possibly be no friend of yours," she said, "I think I am entitled to that amount of respect, at all events."

"It seems only yesterday," exclaimed Hunston, with a sigh, "that we were all children."

"You sigh," exclaimed Emily.

"I have reason to," he answered.

"Are you not happy?"

"No, I shall never be. I look back upon a misspent life and a career of violence. I may lose my life at any time. I have no friend and no one to smile upon me."

"Whose fault is that?"

"It's Harkaway's," replied Hunston, promptly.

"No—no," said Emily, "that is untrue. You have only yourself to blame."

She did not tell him to go away, because she had been several days alone, and only those who know the misery of solitary confinement, can understand the pleasure there is in talking to somebody.

A prisoner will send for the chaplain of the prison, on any pretext, for the sake of a little conversation, which is denied him with the gaolers or his fellow sufferers.

Even Hunston was better than nobody to talk to.

He might tell her how things were going on, and what Jack was doing.

That Harkaway would leave the brigands alone, she did not expect for a moment.

His efforts would redouble against them since the capture of his wife.

"Well," said Hunston, with a reckless laugh, "we will not talk about a poor devil like myself. While there is wine and brandy to be got, I shall not despair."

"How is my husband?" asked Emily.

"Well enough," answered Hunston. "But he has not routed us out yet."

"He will, sooner or later."

"I can tell you what he will do," said Hunston, with a sardonic grin.

"What?"

"He will join you here soon."

"Join me?"

"Not exactly. You will not be allowed to meet, but the chief has a splendid idea for his capture, which, if it comes off, as I think it will, must place Mr. Harkaway in our power."

Emily trembled.

"You will spare his life?" she said. "You cannot be so brutal as to wish for his death."

Hunston made no answer.

He poured some water into a glass, and placed the flowers he held in his hand in it.

"See what pretty flowers I have brought you," he observed.

"I thank you very much, but never mind the flowers; talk to me about Jack," she replied.

"I would rather talk about anybody else."

"Why?"

"Because I hate him, as you know."

Emily clasped her hands together in an entreating manner.

"Oh! do please tell me, Hunston, that you are still man enough to use your influence to let Jack go if they catch him."

"Not I," he answered carelessly.

"What has he done, that you should be so hard upon him?"

"You know as well as I do that he has licked me in everything, all my life through. But I am not quite so hard as you think me."

"I thought you—you might be generous, and I am sure Jack will reward you for it."

"I don't want his favors."

"What, then?"

"Your love."

As he spoke, Hunston looked straight in her face, and so ardent was his gaze that her eyes fell as if some wild beast had been staring at her.

"Love me," said Hunston, "and I will take very good care that no harm comes to Jack."

Emily had gone very white at first, but her pallor was succeeded by a deep red flush of indignation and anger.

"Mr. Hunston," she exclaimed, "you are a low coward and a blackguard, to talk to me in this way! You see I am defenseless, and you insult me."

"Listen to reason, my dear Mrs. Harkaway," he replied, somewhat abashed.

"There is no reason in what you say. It is the old, old story."

"Is it a crime to love you?" he demanded.

"Yes, now that I am another man's wife. You know very well that I dislike you."

"You will not be another man's wife long," he said, with a diabolical smile.

"What do you mean?"

"Harkaway's head will be sent as a present to General Cialdini, and you will be a widow."

"You have to catch him first," answered Emily, repressing her horror and disgust, and trying to be bold.

"That we are sure to do. Our plan is cut and dried. It cannot fail."

"Why?"

"Because the four friends are going to separate, and each one going by himself to hunt for Barboni."

"How do you know this?"

"Our spy, a man named Bigamini, has brought in the information."

"Is Jack coming this way?"

"No; he's going on a wild-goose chase to Torre del Greco."

"Where is that?"

"At the base of Vesuvius, and Barboni is even now making preparations to capture him."

"Very well," said Emily, with the calmness of a heroine. "Heaven has guarded him up to this time."

"Will you not save him?" asked Hunston.

"He would not wish me to save his life by being false to him."

Hunston gnashed his teeth.

"Think of what you are doing," he said.

"I have thought."

"You can make sure of a happy future. Fly with me to some island in the Mediterranean. I have saved money."

"By what means?" asked Emily, scornfully.

"As lieutenant of this band, I have received a large share of the——"

He hesitated.

"Let me fill up the gap for you. Your money is in reality plunder. I can have no dealings with a thief."

"By heaven!" said Hunston, angrily, "you will provoke me too far."

"Go; leave me! Never come here again! Your presence is an insult."

"You shall be mine!" he cried; "if not by fair means, by foul. As a reward for my services, Barboni has promised you to me."

Emily shrank before his impudent gaze.

At this juncture there was a quick footstep behind him.

Hunston found himself seized by the arm and thrown violently backwards.

Turning angrily, he saw Lord Darrel standing between him and his prey.

"Cowardly hound!" said Darrel. "I came in time to hear what you said, and I tell you it is false. You have no power over this lady, nor does Barboni intend that you should have."

Hunston raised his one arm, and shook his fist threateningly at Darrel.

The blood of both men was up.

"Beware!" he said. "You have come between me and Mrs. Harkaway before, and then I gave you fair warning of what you might expect if you did it again."

"Get out of the vault," said Darrel.

"And leave you here? That is very likely!"

"If you don't go, I shall have to kick you out. No one but a rank cur would insult a lady as you have done."

"Oh, my lord," said Emily, "do not quarrel. Send for the brigand chief. Pray do not fight. My nerves are so weak, I cannot bear a scene."

Hunston drew a pistol from his belt.

Cocking it he aimed at Darrel.

"Be off," he said, "or I fire."

Darrel was also armed, and he lost no time in imitating Hunston's example.

"Two can play at that game," he said, between his clenched teeth.

Emily, half fainting with terror, sank upon a rude couch.

Hunston pulled the trigger, but such was his rage and agitation that the bullet whistled harmlessly over Darrel's head.

The latter was about to return his fire, when he lowered his arm.

His face was toward the entrance to the vault, while Hunston had his back against it.

He had seen a tall, commanding form enter hurriedly.

The next instant Hunston's pistol was dashed from his grasp, and Barboni confronted him.

"Leave this chamber, both of you," he exclaimed, imperiously, "and never enter it again on pain of death."

"You promised me that I——" began Hunston.

"Not a word. I will talk to you afterwards. Must I lose my best men through a foolish quarrel? Away to the outer cave, Hunston, and take command of a band waiting to stop travelers on the Appian Road."

Hunston darted a look of implacable hatred at Darrel and slouched unwillingly away.

"Madam," said Barboni, addressing Emily in that low, thrilling tone he knew so well how to adopt when talking to women.

Emily arose from the rude couch, and answered him with a look.

"Your pardon for again being annoyed by one of my officers."

"It is willingly granted," replied Emily, "for I do

lieve it is with your permission that Mr. Hunston persecutes me with his attentions."

"Cospetto! you may say that with truth. But the dogs will exceed orders sometimes. Rest assured it shall not be repeated with my sanction."

Emily bowed in graceful acknowledgment of this promise.

She would have begged him to spare Jack's life should he fall into his hands, but she knew the uselessness of appealing to such a flinty heart.

"Darrelli," said Barboni, "you will accompany me. I have much to say to you."

Gus Darrel held out his hand to Emily, but she did not take it.

She remembered that it was red with the blood of poor Lieutenant Cockles.

Though he had rendered her a service, she could not treat him as a friend.

Somewhat hurt at this studied coldness, he followed the brigand into another vaulted apartment, where a lamp was burning, and they were alone.

"Darrelli," said Barboni, with a grave, preoccupied air, which was unusual with him, "the time has come for an explanation between us."

"What can there be in common between you and I?" asked Darrel, drawing himself up proudly.

"You shall hear. Since Harkaway and his friends have brought us into notoriety, we hold our lives in our hands."

"That is true; but my motto is a short life and a merry one."

"Whatever happens to me—and I suppose I shall end my life on the scaffold, or die by a bullet—I want you to be happy."

"I do not know that I am miserable," replied Darrel.

"You must take your place in society," said the brigand.

"How can I, since that unlucky blow killed Lieutenant Cockles?"

"I have agents in England who have looked into the case, which is really one of manslaughter. You had words with him and struck him; your punishment, therefore, will be a nominal one."

"By Jove!" replied Darrel, stroking his mustache, "if I had looked at it in that light, I need not have cut England."

"There was the hand of fate urging you on. We were destined to meet."

"Bosh!" said Darrel, contemptuously.

"You will not say so when you hear all."

"What possible connection can there be between Lord Darrel and Barboni the brigand?"

"I will tell you. In the first place, you are not, legally, Lord Darrel."

"Not Lord Darrel! Who the deuce am I, then?" cried Gus Darrel, jumping up from the stool on which he had been sitting.

"My son," answered Barboni, solemnly.

Gus Darrell laughed aloud.

"That's good," he said. "I like that; go on, pile it up."

"Santo Dio! I speak the truth."

"Who are you, then?"

"Dominico Ponilippo, the Italian steward, who murders the late Lord Darrell, and ran away with his widow and hid child, leaving my own son in his place."

"Do you mean to say you left me to be brought up as a peer, when I had no right to the honor?"

"I do."

Gus Darrel's countenance fell.

"Tell me all about it," he said.

"Bear patiently with me," answered the brigand; "what I did was for your sake, and had you not given way to your evil passions, and been driven by the force of circumstances to join me in Naples, you would never have known one word of all this."

"If what you say is true—"

"Santa Maria! I swear it."

"Well—well," said Darrel impatiently; "you are right; the hand of fate is in this."

He resumed his seat, and biting his lips till the blood came, waited to hear what Barboni had further to reveal.

CHAPTER XXII.

"LUNI."

"YOUR mother died soon after you were born," Barboni resumed, after a short pause.

"I was born in England, of course," said Darrel.

"You were. It was at Lord Darrel's house that your birth took place. His lordship had given me notice to leave. That angered me, and I resolved to have my revenge."

"A terrible one it was," said Gus Darrel.

"Yes; I have ever been a good hater. Well, I placed you in the cot occupied by the young lord who, like yourself, was only a few weeks old. I killed Lord Darrel, and carried off the young lord and his mother."

"Where are they now?"

"Here," answered Barboni. "For years the mother and child have been captives, living on sufferance, as it were."

"Have I seen either of them?"

"Yes; the boy we call Luni, or Lunatico, a half-witted fellow, is the child."

"Luni? Can it be possible?" returned Darrel.

"The boy was never sharp, and the kicks and cuffs he has received have not tended to sharpen his intellect."

"Why did you not kill him out of the way?" asked Darrel, brutally.

"Because I once had a strong affection for his mother, Lady Darrel, and her heart and soul are wrapped up in the boy."

"Does he know who he is?"

"No; I have threatened to kill him if she breathes a word to him."

"Where is Lady Darrel?"

"She, too, poor creature, is half mad," replied Barboni, "and has been for years. At night you may have seen her wandering harmlessly about, dressed in white."

"Ah! she's what the men call the 'White Specter,'" said Darrel, recollecting that he had seen an apparition such as Barboni described.

"Yes. Il Spirito, or the White Specter, is the name she goes by."

"Does any one but yourself know anything of this precious history?" asked Darrel, bitterly.

"Only her ladyship."

"What is your object in revealing this terrible secret to me?" said Gus Darrel, more earnestly.

"I love my son," was the stern reply.

"Am I in future to call myself Dominico Ponilippo?"

"No! a thousand times no!" replied Barboni, emphatically. "I want you to return to England, and boldly face your trial for the manslaughter of that young fellow. Nothing will come of it, and you can enjoy the title and estates of the Darrel family."

The young man made no answer.

"Son of a brigand, eh?" he muttered. "Cruel stroke of fortune, this. A beggar's brat. Son of an Italian steward. Son of a murderer. Scum! that's what it comes to. Pleasant look out. Scum, nothing but scum!"

"I never meant you to know it," replied Barboni. "I meant you to be rich and great."

"You were certainly an affectionate father," sneered Darrel.

"Why not?"

"You never saw or looked after me."

"I knew you were in good hands. I watched over you from a distance. You were sent to Eton; from Eton you went to a private tutor's, and entered a cavalry regiment. Could your prospects have been brighter?"

"You may be proud of me as a son," answered Darrel, "but I'll be hanged if I am of you as a father."

"Leave me then; quit this place at once."

"No, I won't do that either; I'm not a coward, and I'll see you through this affair of yours with Harkaway. Then, if you like to become a respectable man again, I'll see if I can help you."

Barboni got up and wrung Darrel's hand.

The tears rolled down his rugged cheeks, and it was clear that this roughly-expressed kindness of Darrel had touched his heart. It was a heart not usually accessible to tender emotions.

Yet the man of blood and crime had his weak point, and this was his son.

"Thank you, my boy," he said in a broken voice. "You do not cast me off."

"You have taken me aback by what you have told me," answered Darrel. "But I must make the best of it."

"Believe me, I sacrificed much for your sake in the past."

"Say no more about it. I would rather never have heard this confession and we must meet on the old terms before strangers."

"Certainly. To me only are you the brigand's son."

Scarcely had these words left Barboni's lips, when a rustling in a corner was heard.

"What's that?" asked Darrel.

Barboni strode to the spot, and removing some matting which had been placed there, revealed the form of a young man.

Darrel approached cautiously.

"Come out," he said, giving the crouching figure a kick.

A thin, wretched-looking youth reluctantly got up and came into the light of the lamp.

"Luni!" exclaimed Barboni. "How came you here?"

"I fell asleep, signor, and only awoke when I heard voices just now," was the reply.

Gus Darrel took a long look at him.

He had before him the real Lord Darrel, the heir to the title and estates which he had so long usurped.

Luni had a vacant countenance, a shambling walk, and a startled manner.

His attire was ragged and fantastic, and his lack of intelligence was easily visible.

Gus Darrel gave him a hearty box on the ears.

"Don't tell any lies, you rascal!" he said. "You've been listening."

Luni was as tall as Darrel, but not nearly so thick-set or strong.

They were of the same age, though no one would have taken the puny, half-starved, trembling, knock-kneed youth to be as old as Darrel.

Instead of returning the blow, he burst into tears.

"Don't hit me," he said; "please don't hit me again, and I'll tell the truth."

Darrel's only reply was to hit him again, and this time with his fist between the eyes.

"Oh, Santissimi Virgine!" cried Luni, as he staggered back and fell on the floor.

"Get up!" said Gus Darrel, kicking him. "I knew you were listening all along. Get up, or I'll murder you!"

He hated him because he now knew that he was the real Lord Darrel.

Poor, half-witted, ill-treated, starved and ragged as he was, this outcast was nevertheless a peer of Great Britain.

It was gall and wormwood to Gus Darrel to know this.

His vicious nature made him detest the poor fellow for it.

"Gently," said Barboni; "leave him to me."

He took the youth by the arm and raised him to his feet.

"Luni," he said.

"Si, signor."

"You know me?"

Luni looked at him in a scared, half terrified manner.

"Si, signor," he replied.

"Tell me the truth. I have beaten you before, and you know I can do it again. Who sent you in here to spy upon us?"

"She did."

"Who?"

"Il Spirito."

"What have you heard?" asked Barboni.

"I cannot tell. You frighten me too much. I heard something, but I have forgotten; it has all gone away. He bit me so hard. Oh! let me go, please," replied Luni, in a quick, nervous tone.

"Give him to me; I'll make the obstinate beggar speak," said Gus Darrel.

Barboni allowed him to remove him from his grasp.

Holding him by his hair with one hand, Darrel hit him hard, right and left, kicking him to keep him upright when he stumbled.

Luni struggled desperately, and uttered piercing cries.

Then his yells subsided into subdued moans and sobs.

Suddenly a form darkened the doorway, a dagger gleamed in the lamplight, and Gus Darrel's arm dropped useless by his side, while the blood streamed down to the floor.

"Confound it!" he said; "what is this?"

Luni was released, and he ran to the door.

Gus Darrel looked in the direction of Barboni, and saw him standing with his arms folded. Then he turned his gaze on one side.

Now he saw that it was neither Barboni nor Luni that had wounded him.

The blow had been struck by a woman.

She was tall and thin, haggard and woe-begone, her dress a ragged muslin, which clung awkwardly to her gaunt frame, while her tangled hair streamed wildly over her shoulders.

In her eye was a fierce light, akin to madness, and, attenuated though her features were, they still preserved traces of nobility, if not of beauty.

Her hand was upraised, and still held the dagger which had crippled the arm which dealt the cruel blows to Luni.

He shrank back, cowering before this strange apparition.

"What is it?" asked he of the brigand.

"Lady Darrel," replied Barboni.

Looking angrily at the brigand, she exclaimed:

"Murderer and assassin! Heaven will not much longer permit you to continue your infamous career."

"Angela," answered Barboni, softly, as he addressed her by her christian name, "you are excited to-day. Take the lad and leave me with my friend."

"He, too, is a scoundrel; but the lion must have his jackal," said her ladyship, with a sneering laugh.

Luni took advantage of this lull in the storm to crawl away and hide himself behind his mother.

"Send the old hag away," said Darrel, impatiently.

She turned her eyes fiercely upon him.

"Wretched spawn of a vile race," she said furiously, "your days are numbered. I speak with prophetic voice. My sufferings have given me a second sight, and with your death will come the time when my child's wrongs and my own shall be righted."

Darrel trembled at this denunciation.

Taking Luni by the hand, she smoothed back his hair, kissed his tear-stained face, and led him quickly from the vault.

"That's a relief," exclaimed Darrel, drawing a deep breath.

"She is becoming troublesome," remarked Barboni, with a clouded brow.

Darrel was engaged in binding up the wound that his strange visitor had inflicted. It bled freely and caused him considerable pain.

"You have the remedy in your own hands," he said.

"Yes," replied the brigand. "But I could never make up my mind to offer her any violence."

"I have pitied her, and considered her as harmless as her brat."

"She might be dangerous, for she appears to know too much."

"It is not often that her mind is so clear as to allow her

to speak in the way she did just now. Seeing Luni struck, irritated her. In a short time she will have forgotten all about it."

"I should give the pair of them a bullet through the head," replied Darrel.

"No necessity for that; forget that you have seen them," answered Barboni.

In spite of Gus Darrel's efforts, he could not stop the bleeding from his wound.

It was necessary to go into the outer cave for assistance, and the conversation came to an end.

Barboni evinced the greatest anxiety for his welfare, and from that day showed him a tenderness which few would have thought the brigand capable of feeling.

As for Darrel, the revelation gave him food for thought which was not altogether of a pleasant nature.

He unexpectedly found himself an imposter.

Augustus Lord Darrel was nothing better than the son of Dominico Ponilippo, alias Barboni the brigand.

Lady Darrel and her son, the real possessor of the title, were wretched, half-mad captives in the brigand's cave.

Much rather would he that the bewildering confession had never been made.

Lady Darrel had predicted his death.

This he fancied was simply the foolish ravings of an angry and excited woman.

The future was black and lowering.

It was with a mind ill at ease, and a faint heart, that he went about his ordinary duties.

He longed for some decisive event to happen, so that he might make some change in his position.

At one time he thought of murdering Lady Darrel and Luni, and afterwards returning to England to take his trial for the manslaughter of Lieutenant Cockles.

At all hazards, he wanted to get away from the brigands, and once more be the rich Lord Darrel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

THE four friends started as they had agreed.

Tom Carden went across the Volturmo in the direction of the Prince di Villanova's property.

Harvey explored the mountains on the right of Castle Inferno.

The little coxswain started for the sybil's cave, while Harkaway went to Terre del Greco to search among the lava and the vines for the mysterious brigand upon whom nobody could put his hand.

Consequently, Hilda and Lily Cockles were alone, with only Mr. Mole and Monday to look after and protect them.

On the morning which saw the departure of the four friends in different directions, the Prince di Villanova entered into Naples.

He rode his horse into the stables of the Contessa di Malafedi.

Bigamini was lounging about the yard.

Directly he saw the prince he came up with a respectful salutation and assisted him to dismount.

"What news?" curtly demanded the prince.

"The four Englishmen have started each in a different direction to look for Barboni," replied Bigamini.

"Per Baccho!" said the prince, with a smile which showed his white teeth, "some madness has seized them."

"They're like the bundle of sticks," said Bigamini, "when together, all right, but split up, they'll find themselves nowhere."

"Your letter said that Harkaway intended to go to Vesuvius; is that so?"

"Your highness is right."

"Good. Take this paper."

He handed the spy a sheet of paper, on which something was written.

These are your instructions. At the Portici vineyard you will find Hunstoni with six men dressed as laborers."

Bigamini nodded his head.

"Is the contessa within?" asked the prince.

"No; she has gone to Sorrento."

"Go. Do your duty, and you shall be rewarded."

The prince waved his hand and strode from the stable yard into the Stradi di Toledo.

He stopped before the palazzo occupied by Jack and Harvey.

In a deep voice he muttered, "Per Dio! Both your lives shall yet be in my hands."

As he spoke, a vindictive frown lowered on his brow.

Monday met the prince at the door, and in reply to his inquiries, said that the gentlemen were all out, but he would take his name up to the ladies.

Hilda consented to receive the prince, who was shown into the drawing-room, where she was sitting with Lily.

Mr. Mole had made himself a sort of bed under some orange trees in the garden, and here with his cask he dozed away the best part of the day.

He had also renewed his friendship with Monday.

The black would give him his arm-chair in the little pantry, and place before him the most thirst provoking drinks.

Not that Mr. Mole required any inducement to indulge himself.

In return for Monday's kind attentions, Mole would give him all the news from Limbi.

Tell him of the latest movements of the Pisangs, and all that had happened during his brief governorship of the island.

The prince complimented the ladies on their good looks in his oily Italian style.

To Lily he paid especial attention.

The girl did not absolutely dislike the prince, but she felt afraid of him.

He fascinated her, as a serpent is said to attract any living thing which comes within the influence of its eye.

Hilda asked him to stay for lunch, which he did.

In the afternoon he was again by Lily's side, and she found herself telling him her history.

She seemed as if she had known this strange man all her life.

Hilda had retired to indulge in a siesta, or afternoon sleep, being overcome by heat.

"So, my little child," said the prince, "you are all alone in the world?"

"Yes," replied Lily, with a sigh.

"You have cause to dislike the family of Darrel."

"I bear no malice toward Lord Darrel," answered Lily.

"But he made a cruel break-up in our happy family."

You must marry," said the prince.

"Ah," said Lily, this time smiling, "marriage has its cares, and I do not know any one who would have me."

"Hundreds of men would only be too happy," answered the Prince di Villanova; "I know one."

"Do you, indeed? Who is he?"

"A prince; rich, considered handsome, loving and affectionate."

"Those are great recommendations," she cried; "what is his name?"

"My child," replied Villanova, "pardon this abruptness; I speak of myself. It is——"

Lily looked up, pained and surprised.

"I cannot pardon such a declaration," she said; "you have no right to make it."

"But——"

"We are almost strangers. I have given you no encouragement."

"You do not know the impulsiveness of the Neapolitan nature," answered the prince, not at all disconcerted.

"I must beg you to leave me."

"Presently, amico mio. First of all, I must see this cloud

pass away. You will promise me to think over what I have said?"

"In spite of herself Lily was constrained to say:

"Yes."

"Come, add to that something."

"What?"

"Say you are not angry with me for expressing my love for the most beautiful girl I have ever seen."

"I forgive you, prince," replied Lily; "though you really must leave me. I will tell Mrs. Harvey. She is my friend. I will be guided——"

"You will tell no one, cara mia," interrupted Villanova. This is our secret. Promise me."

Once more Lily found herself obeying him.

"Soon we will talk further of this, for it is your destiny to become my wife. Fight against it, struggle as you may, pretty one, you will be the Princess di Villanova."

He arose, and kissing her hand, which she allowed him to take, went away.

When he was gone she burst into tears.

The strange scene had taken her completely by surprise.

She knew that Walter Campbell loved her.

A girl can always tell when a man is fond of her.

How angry Walter would be if he knew of the prince's conduct.

Certainly she had not pledged herself to Walter, but she liked him better than she did the prince.

Yet she felt that Villanova had such a magic influence over her, that if he were to command her to accept his hand, she would be unable to refuse.

"I must not see him again. I must hide myself," she murmured in terrified accents. "Oh, how I fear that man."

The prince felt perfectly satisfied.

He had established an influence over Lily which he knew she could not shake off.

With a smile of placid contentment he went into the city and purchased a very valuable diamond bracelet.

This he carried himself to Monday, requesting him to take it to Miss Cockles, with his compliments.

The door of Monday's room was open, and he saw Mr. Mole sitting in the armchair, busily sucking sherry cobbles through a straw.

"A fine day, sir," he said, recognizing Mole as a companion of Harkaway and Carden, on the day of the duel between the latter and Barboni.

"It always is fine here," replied Mole.

"Heavenly climate," continued the prince,

"I don't know so much about that," said Mole. "A jolly good yellow fog wouldn't be half bad, by way of a change."

The prince smiled.

"Have a cobbler?" asked Mole.

"Thank you. Will you mix me one" said Villanova.

"What do you take me for," asked Mole, indignantly, "eh? I am the late governor of the important island of Limbi."

"Indeed!"

"It is evident you don't know me."

"Pardon me your excellency," said Villanova, repressing a smile.

"That is better. Excellency; I like that. Nothing like giving a man his title. If you want a grog or a cobbler, Monday will attend to you."

"I will await his return. By the way, you are an old friend of Mr. Harkaway."

"Taught him all he knows," replied Mole.

"Really?"

"And that isn't much. The fact is, Mr. Harkaway can do nothing without me. I shall have to catch this brigand fellow for him."

Villanova smiled again.

"From all accounts," he said, "he is not so easily caught."

"I'll back myself to catch him in a given time, sir," said Mole; adding, "where's that Monday?"

"Here um am, sir," replied Monday, entering the pantry.

"Well?" ejaculated Villanova.

"Miss Lily, she send her thanks, sir," said Monday.

The prince nodded his head.

He thought the influence he had established over her would be great enough to induce her to accept his present.

In fact, Lily was afraid to send it back.

"Mix this gentleman a cobbler, Monday," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

Monday compounded the drink, and handed it to the prince.

"Now I will give you a toast," said Mole.

"I will drink it with pleasure."

"Confusion to the brigands."

Villanova drank the toast in silence.

"If they only knew that I'd arrived, they'd cave in at once," continued Mole, throwing himself back in a chair.

There was a pause, during which Mr. Mole applied himself vigorously to his glass.

"People say um Vesuvius going to bust up, sare," remarked Monday.

"We have been expecting an eruption for some days past," replied the prince.

"What is Vesuvius?" said Mole, contemptuously.

"A large volcanic mountain."

"Pooh—pooh! An ant hill, you mean."

"An eruption is a grand sight."

"Bosh! what is it? Something like a schoolboy's squib. You should have been in the Malay Archipelago with me. We had eruptions there, and earthquakes."

"Vesuvius is not to be despised," said the prince.

"Rot! I tell you," answered Mole. "You know nothing about it. I wouldn't go across the street to see your Roman candle at work."

"I don't think you would go very far for anything at present," replied the prince.

"What sir? Do you defy me? Monday."

"Yes, sare."

"Did this man insult me?"

"Um not hear him, sare," replied Monday.

"Oh, yes he did, and I'm not going to stand his cheek. Take him away, Monday, or I shall do him an injury."

Monday showed his gleaming teeth, but did not move.

Mr. Mole attempted to rise; his legs, however, were not obedient.

They trembled to such an extent that he sank back in his chair.

"You may thank your stars," he exclaimed, "that my gout has come on. Monday, turn that person out."

"I wish to save you the trouble of any further talking," answered the prince. "Good-day."

Mr. Mole took up a glass and threw it at Villanova.

It struck him in the back.

"Ha—ha!" he said, with a drunken chuckle, "I had him then, Monday. By my life, I can do it. Ha—ha!"

The prince turned around angrily.

In a corner of the room was a hat box of Jack's.

It was empty.

Taking it up, he came back to Mole and jammed it down over his head.

The bottom was soon crushed through, and Mole's head was invisible.

With a handkerchief, the prince fastened his hands behind him,

Seizing him by the shoulder, he said:

"Come with me."

"Boo—hoo! I say, Monday. Hallo! give me air. Hoo—hoo—hoo!" gasped Mole, from the depths of the hat box.

"I'll teach you how Italian gentlemen punish drunken Englishmen who insult them," continued the prince.

Monday looked on with a grin.

But when the prince dragged Mr. Mole, still bellowing, towards the street door, he thought he ought to interfere.

He had no very great respect for the late governor of Limbi.

Still he liked him, and was his friend to a certain extent.

"Hi, mist' prince," he said; "you let um go, please sare."

"He has insulted me," said the prince.

"Mast' Jack never speak to you again, sare, if you hurt Mist' Mole."

"I dare say I can survive the infliction."

"Me tell um all about it."

"You are perfectly at liberty to do so."

The prince had by this time gained the street, into the middle of which he dragged the unhappy Mole.

Giving him a kiek, he said:

"Remember in future how to talk to an Italian prince."

Then he strode hastily away.

The force of the kick precipitated Mole on his hands and knees.

He looked so comical, that Monday, who saw there was no further danger of his being hurt, put his hands on his knees and laughed loudly.

Mr. Mole was too tipsy to get up straight.

Every time he tried he rolled back, and even had he been sober, it was no easy thing to do with his hands tied behind his back.

All he could do was to crawl hither and thither.

He poked his hat-boxed head first one way and then the other.

A crowd of people collected.

It tickled the fancy of the Neapolitans immensely.

Roars of laughter broke from the crowd.

"Um never see such funny things," said Monday to himself. "Ha—ha—ha!"

"Ha—ha—ha!" echoed the throng.

"Um split um side. Ho—ho!" cried Monday.

Mr. Mole was rendered desperate by the laughter of the crowd.

It buzzed in his ears like the falling of water.

With a desperate effort, he dragged one hand out of the handkerchief which bound his wrists.

Then he grasped the hat-box fiercely.

It came off, after doing some damage to his ears.

"Where is the villain who did this?" he cried, holding the hat-box aloft.

No one made any reply.

"The coward dare not show himself," he went on.

Casting the hat-box on the ground, he jumped savagely upon it.

"Thus I pound and crush my enemies," he said.

The next moment he lost his balance and fell on the top of it.

Redoubled roars of laughter came from the onlookers, who enjoyed this "comico Inglese," as they called him, very much indeed.

Monday now ran forward, and taking Mr. Mole in his arms, carried him into the house.

"I'm orright, my good fren'," said Mr. Mole.

"Come 'long, sare."

"Lemme 'lone—tell you, I'm orright."

"Keep still, sare, and don't kick um so," said Monday.

"Doosed odd, the 'ffect of this country," muttered Mole. "Heat of sun so great that 'bliged to get blacks to carry me."

Monday carried him along a passage into the garden, and safely deposited him on his bed under the orange trees.

He soon fell asleep.

"Him right now," he said. "When um wake up, um want him supper and begin again."

Then the scene in the street with Mole and the hat-box on his head occurred to him, and he went back to his pantry giggling.

"Old Mole, him good fun!" he exclaimed. "Monday like um Mole! He—he—he! Ho—ho—ho!"

He burst out laughing again, till he was obliged to kick his feet on the floor to stop himself.

THREE or four days slipped by.

They were passed in great anxiety by Hilda, who was fearful that something had happened to her husband.

The prince di Villanova called every day, and his influence over Lily grew stronger.

Hilda did not fail to notice that something was preying upon her young friend's mind.

On the morning of the fifth day, the ladies were sitting in the drawing-room.

The Venetian blinds were closed to keep out the heat, and two small fountains sent up their cooling spray to the ceiling.

"Tell me, my sweet pet," said Hilda, "what are you thinking of?"

"I dare not," answered Lily.

She started, at the sound of Mrs. Harvey's voice, as if aroused from some deep abstraction.

"Dare not!" echoed Hilda.

"He told me not to breathe a syllable to any one."

"Who?"

Lily was silent.

"There is some mystery in this," pursued Hilda. "You ought not to have any secret from me."

Still Lily preserved a profound silence.

"I see how it is," said Hilda, with a deep sigh. "You are in love."

"I do not know whether it is love. To me it seems more akin to fear," answered Lily.

"This dreadful brigand hunting is enough to kill any one. My rest is broken at night, and I have little peace by day," returned Hilda.

"It is not that which worries me," said Lily, "though of course I sympathize deeply with you."

"Are you not in love with Walter Campbell?"

"Walter! no—that is at least—I was not speaking of him!" stammered Lily.

"Who then? Surely not the prince?"

Lily nodded her head.

"I should never have thought it. He is so proud and haughty; not at all calculated to attract a young girl, and Walter, I know, loves you."

"Does he?" asked Lily, simply.

"Yes, indeed. He told Richard so, and of course he told me, as married men generally tell their wives everything."

"I do not know how it is," replied Lily. "I must be very weak-minded, and silly, and foolish."

"Why?"

"Because I do believe the prince could make me do anything he told me."

"Indeed?"

"It is true. Did you ever hear of magnetic influence? I feel like something that must fly to him, as if he were a loadstone," said Lily.

"You must fight against it. The little coxswain, as Richard calls him, would break his heart if you were to marry that stern foreigner."

"He is not stern to me."

"No."

"No, indeed; he seems soft and gentle, and his voice has such a charm, it rings in my ears like sweet music for hours after he is gone," said Lily.

Hilda was about to make some further remark, when the door opened and Harvey rushed in.

He was covered with dust and looked wild and excited, while his skin was as brown as a berry from exposure to the sun.

Hilda threw herself in his arms, with a loud cry.

"Oh, thank God, you have come back," she cried, while the tears started to her eyes.

"Bless you, my own love," replied Harvey, straining her to his breast, and kissing her tenderly.

He placed her again in the chair from which she had risen, and shaking hands with Lily, looked at himself in the glass.

"I look as if I had been sleeping in open," he remarked. "Ah, Harvey," said Mr. Mole's voice, at the door. "I heard you had come back. Have you brought the brigand's head with you?"

"No, I haven't, worse luck."

"I thought it would be left for me to capture the miscreant," said Mole, looking very wise.

"I have searched the mountains thoroughly, and could find no trace of cave or brigands. Has any one else returned?"

"You are the first," said Hilda.

"I hope the others have come off better than I," said Harvey. "Can you send Monday to me, Mr. Mole? I must think about changing my things, and having a tub."

He ran up stairs, and Mr. Mole went in search of Monday. Hilda was delighted, and the roses came back to her pale cheeks as if by magic.

Love makes us very selfish, and she did not seem to care about the others now that she had Dick restored to her once more.

Scarcely had Harvey finished dressing and descended to the drawing-room again when there was another arrival.

The second comer was the little coxswain.

"Any luck?" asked Harvey, eagerly shaking him by the hand.

"Not the smell of an oil rag," replied Walter, bowing to the ladies.

"Another blank draw?"

"Have you done no good?"

"Might as well have stopped at home," replied Harvey.

"I saw the old witch, and watched her cave like a cat does a mouse hole; but it was no use."

"If I did not know all that I do know, I should say there wasn't a brigand in the whole country."

"Same here," replied Walter.

There was a slight pause, during which the gentlemen were wondering where the brigands could have got to, and the ladies were thinking what nonsense it was to go brigand hunting at all.

"I'm sure I wish we had never come to Naples," said Hilda.

"Don't say that, dear," replied Harvey. "It will all come right in the end."

"I have lost my dearest friend on earth."

"You mean Emily?"

"Yes."

"Oh, we'll get her back again; never fear."

"It's easier said than done, I'm afraid," said Hilda, with a melancholy shake of her head.

There was a sound of footsteps on the stairs.

"Here's another," said Walter. "That's Jack, I'll bet."

"No, it isn't; it's too Heavy for Jack. I think it must be our giant."

"Carden?"

"Yes."

"You are right, by Jove! Hullo, Tom, old man, how have you sped?" inquired the little coxswain.

"I've drawn several covers, but no find, though I've had the honor of being shot at three times," answered Carden, with his usual cool imperturbability.

"The dev—beg pardon, but have you really?" exclaimed Walter.

Carden lifted his tall-crowned felt hat, which had three holes in it.

"You've done that yourself, Tom, to cram us," laughed Walter.

"If I have, may I be eternally cut by every decent man I know!"

"Well, we're glad to see you back safe and sound."

"Mrs. Harvey, pardon me my rudeness—and you too, Miss Cockles—in parleying with this dust-begrimed, ill-

favoured ruffian, before I reported myself to you," said Carden.

"Thank you kindly," said the little coxswain. "What do you call yourself?"

"You fellows had better get up stairs and change," said Harvey, "for you'll neither of you do to go to the Queen's drawing-room."

"We've had five days and nights of it in the open air," replied Carden, adding: "Heard anything of Harkaway?"

"No."

"He hasn't turned up?"

"Not yet."

"Perhaps he's caught the fox."

"Or got caught himself," said Hilda. "I had a frightful dream about Jack last night."

"*Absit omen!*" exclaimed Harvey.

"So say I. May the omen mean nothing. I'd rather lose my hand than Jack should come to grief," said the little coxswain, warmly.

All at once Mr. Mole burst into the room, exhibiting strong excitement.

"My dear boys, glad to see you all back again, he exclaimed.

"What's the matter, sir? Your wool's gone the wrong way," said Harvey.

"Has my hair taken to stand on end?"

"Yes."

"Ah! It's only a way it's got when I'm put out."

"What's up?"

"I am the bearer of bad news."

"About whom?"

"A most alarming rumor has reached me. I cannot trace it to its source, but it is currently reported in Naples that Harkaway is captured by the brigands."

Had a bombshell fallen in the midst of the three friends, it could not have created greater consternation than this announcement.

"Jack taken!" cried Harvey, dismally.

"Harkaway gobbled!" said the little coxswain, blankly.

"Our leader in limbo!" cried Carden, angrily. "I'll not believe it. Where did you get the news, Mr. Mole?"

"In Monday's room. I—I go there occasionally to have a chat with the black, as I am so well acquainted with his country, and all that."

He forgot to say Monday supplied him with liquor *ad lib.*, as well as filling his flask for him whenever he went out to take a siesta in the shady part of the garden.

"Jack taken!" said Harvey again. "Well, I'm flabbergasted."

"It's knocked me into a three-cornered hat," cried Walter.

"Who told Monday?" asked Tom Carden.

The practical mind of the ex-captain of the Oxford eight would not be satisfied until it got to the bottom of this alarming rumor.

"I'll tell you all I know willingly," answered Mr. Mole.

The three young men bent forward in their anxiety to hear what he had to say.

They had not expected this cruel stroke of fortune; nor could they yet bring themselves to believe it.

Jack Harkaway taken prisoner by the brigands!

Jack in the power of Barboni!

It seemed impossible.

CHAPTER XXV.

TWO MUCH-MARRIED MEN.

So quiet was every one when Mr. Mole began to speak, that you might have heard a pin drop.

"There is a little man down stairs," said Mr. Mole, "who, I am informed by Monday, practised in England the sartorial art."

"Talk plain English," replied Carden, impetuously.

"My dear Carden, why this impulsiveness?" said Mr. Mole, blandly.

"Because I hate rot of that sort."

"Sartor in Latin, is tailor; therefore, sartorial means relating to the trade of a tailor. Have you so soon forgotten your Latin? but it is just like you boating men."

"He means Bigamini," replied Harvey.

"Yes, that is his benighted name. The creature calls himself Bigamini, though why he should apply such a strange appellation to himself is more than your humble servant, Isaac Mole, can discover."

"Why does some people call themselves Moles?" said the little coxswain.

"Sir," replied Mr. Mole, turning sharply around.

"Go on with your story, quick."

"I beg your pardon; you did me the honor to address an observation to me."

"Did I?"

"Undoubtedly, and it was not of a very flattering nature—I will thank you to explain it."

"I didn't mean anything," said the little coxswain with a subdued groan.

"Shut up, Walter," said Harvey, "what's the use of riling Mole?"

"Look here," interrupted Carden, "are we coming to the point or not? What is this about Harkaway?"

"Bigamini says he has been captured by Barboni," answered Mr. Mole.

"That's what I want to get at. Harvey, will you kindly send for Bigamini, if he is down-stairs with Monday?" exclaimed Carden.

Harvey rang the bell, and the little tailor was sent for.

He came into the room, bowing profoundly first to the ladies and then to the gentlemen.

Altogether Bigamini seemed most profoundly affected.

"Gentlemen, your most obedient," he exclaimed.

"What is this you have been saying about Mr. Harkaway?" inquired Tom Carden, who took upon himself at once the office of spokesman.

"Very sorry, sir," he exclaimed, "but I'm the messenger of bad tidings."

"What tidings?"

"I happened to look in at the Cafe di Europa, and the one topic of conversation was the capture of Mr. Harkaway by the brigands."

"Is that all you know?" inquired Carden.

"Yes, sir."

"They say that Mr. Harkaway is captured by Barboni," said Carden.

"Yes, sir," replied Bigamini again.

"I told you that it was the common talk of Naples," put in Mole.

"Oh, oh—Boo—oo—o!" sobbed Bigamini. "If I might be allowed the blessed privilege to lay down my life for my generous benefactor—oo—ooo!"

"Stop that blubbering. Is that all you can tell us?" asked Carden.

"You know as much as I do, sir. Oh, if I could only die for—"

"Go down stairs."

"You don't believe me, sir, because I'm a miserable Bigamini; but if what I hear is true, I'm not the only one in this room who has married two wives."

The little tailor darted a significant look at Mole.

"Go down-stairs, I tell you!" exclaimed Carden, "and ask Monday to give you some refreshment."

"Thank you kindly, sir. My wives were white, and—"

"Be off!"

Bigamini again wiped his eyes, bowed profoundly to them, and then quitted the room.

"Shut that door after you," exclaimed the little coxswain.

"I will do that," said Mr. Mole; "this man spoke about wives. Do you think he meant to insult me?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," replied Walter; "all I can think of now is Harkaway's position."

"Do you insult me again? If I thought—"

"Leave us, please, Mr. Mole, to talk the matter over," said Harvey.

"Certainly, but—"

"If you can't help us, don't upset us," said the coxswain.

"My dear, good sir, so please do away; this is no time for foolishness," said Tom Carden. "If Harkaway is really captured, we must be off to-night to try and rescue him."

Carden, Harvey and the little coxswain immediately retired into a corner of the room, and became absorbed in an animated conversation.

Mr. Mole descended the stairs, threaded the passage, and entered Monday's pantry with the professed object of seeing if he could "pump" Bigamini.

Bigamini was seated in a chair, holding in his hand a glass of wine.

"Monday," said Mole, "who is this man?"

"Um little harmless fellow they call Bigamini, sare," replied Monday.

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Him got um two wives, sare."

"Indeed? He ought to be punished. He is not the sort of person to be encouraged in this house," Monday.

"You shut up," said Bigamini. "My wives are white, and you've got two black ones, you old Mormonite."

Mr. Mole turned pale with rage.

"Monday!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sare."

"You heard what he called me. Me, Isaac Mole, a Bachelor of Arts and a Doctor of Laws! He called me a Mormonite!"

"So you are," shouted Bigamini.

"I command you, Monday, to eject that objectionable individual," said Mr. Mole.

"If you start, sare, Monday give um help," answered the black, with a grin.

"If!" said Mr. Mole, with a look of supreme disdain, "I wouldn't soil my fingers with such carrion."

"Sir!" said Bigamini, "I feel that right-minded people have a right to despise me."

"I do despise you," answered Mole.

"You have no right to do so."

"Why?"

"I am a miserable Bigamini. Once I was a happy Smiffins. You, too, are a miserable Bigamini, because you, like myself, have married two wives."

"Fellow!" said Mole, indignantly.

"Fellow yourself," replied Bigamini. "I'm not going to knuckle down to you."

"Beware!" cried Mole threateningly.

"I'm as good as you are."

"My wives are dead. They were drowned at sea, I am thankful to say."

"I say," said Bigamini, stopping before Mr. Mole.

"Vulgar and contemptible bigamist, mind your eye!" shouted Mole.

The next moment Bigamini had rolled under the table and saw stars.

In a moment he was up again and rubbing his eye.

"Do you think I'm going to stand this?" exclaimed Bigamini. "Look out, sir. I'm coming. Who's afraid?"

The next minute they were at it, hammer and tongs.

"Go it, one! go it, t'other! Hit um up, sare!" cried Monday, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Suddenly Bigamini sat down and began to rub his stomach.

"Ah, how um like that?" asked Monday.

"That was a body blow, I flatter myself," said Mole, regarding the little tailor complacently.

"What did you hit below the line for?" asked Bigamini.

"What line?"

"The stomach line. You hit below the belt, governor. It ain't fair. You're a coward, that's what you is."

"That took his wind, eh, Monday?" said Mole.

"You hyked me in the grummet," continued Bigamini, "and I'll slate you for it presently. You don't think I'm going to stand hyking in the grummet by the likes of you."

"Come on, my worthy friend; I hope you like it," replied Mole.

Bigamini arose, with a gasp of pain, and clinching his fists, ran again at his opponent.

"Spile um beauty, sare! Paint um ugly face," replied Monday.

"Such is my pious intention," answered Mole.

Another round took place, the result of which was that Bigamini got well on to the nose, and Mr. Mole measured his length on the floor.

"That's one on the conk. All fair and square. First blood to me," remarked Bigamini.

"Monday, give me wine and wipe my nose. It bleeds overmuch," said Mole, in piteous accents.

Monday lifted him up, and gave him a dust-

er to apply to his injured nose, and handed him a tumbler of iced wine.

"Persuade that contemptible little humbug to go away," said Mole.

"Now, then," said Monday, "you can va moose."

"Not I," replied Bigamini, boldly.

"Clear out this caboose," cried Monday.

"My valiant representative of a persecuted and fallen race," said Bigamini. "I—"

"What um call me?"

"Valiant offspring of a line of kings."

"Um like that better," said Monday.

"Will you allow the ninth part of a man to mock you, Monday?" said Mr. Mole.

"Think um chaffing, sare?"

"I am sure of it. Turn him out."

"Now, then, clear um track," said Monday, threateningly.

"I go. Use no further violence," replied Bigamini. "Mr. Mole, I wish you good-night."

"Good-night," replied Mole, mopping his nose.

"In the language of the ancients, I say adoo."

"Be off!"

"I slope. But ere I go I wish to drink a glass with you, just to show there is no animosity. We're both Bigaminis. And I say—"

"What?"

"Isn't it funny when you feel that way?"

Bigamini began to whistle a popular air, and gayly danced out of the door.

Stopping at the door, he put his finger to his nose and said:

"When we marry our third, won't it be? You know. Yum—yum!"

With which enigmatical sentence, he again pirouetted out into the passage, and so into the street.

Scarcely had he quitted the door of the house than he stopped short.

In front of him was a woman.

She was not a Neapolitan.

Her dress was a cotton print, her shawl was redolent of the New Cut, and she carried a baggy-looking umbrella, which looked as if it was usually suspended over an apple-stall.

It was this woman who had frightened Bigamini.

If she weighed a stone, she was at least sixteen.

The woman grounded her umbrella as a soldier does his rifle, and took a long, steady look at Bigamini.

Then she made a rush at him.

"Yahl!" she exclaimed. "I've got him."

The next instant she held him tightly by the arm.

Then she let him go, and began to box his ears soundly.

"You wretch!" she said. "I swore I'd follow you to the bend of the hearth, and I've found you at last, among the garlic-eating furrineers, and the hussies as I've ofen 'eard on, but never seen before."

Bigamini uttered a howl, and ran as quickly as he could into the house again.

Mr. Mole had stopped the bleeding of his nose, and was standing in front of the cupboard where Monday kept his bottles.

"My friend," he said, "we'll liquor up. Let us indulge after that bout of arms, in which I think I may claim to be victorious."

"What um row in um street, sare?" asked Monday.

"I know not. Ah! here is that thief of a Bigamini come back. Monday, protect mel I call upon you!"

Bigamini, however, had not much fight left in him. If he had seen a ghost, he could not have looked more scared.

"Jehosaphat!" he exclaimed. "Ain't this a go?"

"What?" asked Monday, who had taken a pipe.

"Have you got a hole a poor devil can creep into?"

"What for?"

"I've seen my wife!"

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "I can pity him. Which one is it—the first or the second?"

"The first, worse luck. Second's all right."

"Hide him, Monday, hide him! We are not bereft of Christian kindness, I hope," said Mole, feelingly.

"Here," said Monday, "come under this table. Quick with um."

Bigamini would gladly have done as he was told. But he was too late.

Mrs. Smiffins was at his heels.

She burst into the room, and saying, "Here, you ass, wretch, beast, brute!" began to belabor him with her bloated-looking gingham.

"Oh, you bad man!" she said. "Oh, you cruel wretch! Oh, you savage monster!" "Leave off, Sarah Ann!" cried the wretch. "Oh, Smiffins, how could you do it?" she said.

The little man fell on his knees before her, and held up his hands in an attitude of supplication.

"I was druv to it," he said.

"What?"

Again the umbrella was brought into requisition.

"I say, leave off basting. It hurts," said Bigamini.

"I shan't! What do you mean by it?" replied Mrs. Smiffins.

"I don't mean nothing."

"Avent I followed you through thick and thin into this furrin country, being 'elped by detectives has hi employed to trace you out?"

Bigamini made no answer.

"Hain't the bisniss gone to wrack and ruin?"

"Still so gently o'er me stealing," said Bigamini, changing his tactics. "Oh, those much beloved tones! Oh, that sweet voice!"

"It ain't sweet. I'm 'usky with a cold," replied practical Mrs. Smiffins.

Again she beat him savagely.

"Don't go on a-gamping me with that thing. I won't stand t," answered Bigamini.

"You wretch! Won't you? What do you say to this? Hit's a warrant for your arrest. You've committed bigamy, and I can lock you up."

Bigamini began to tremble again.

"My dear, be quiet. You're the only girl I ever loved."

"Perhaps you've got another 'ussy over here."

"No, my sweetest pet."

"Hit's my hopinion you're a perjured liar," said Mrs. Smiffins.

"Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, still crouching before the formidable being with the big umbrella.

"Well?"

"I have seen the horror and the folly of my ways."

"Not you."

"So 'elp me Bob, I have. Oh, Sarah Ann! kiss her own Smiffins."

"I hain't hagoing to do nothing of the sort until I see if this is ginnywine or not," replied Sarah Ann, flatly.

"It is upon my bended knees I swear it. Oh, Sarah Ann, the strong should always be merciful. Kiss her own Smiff."

"Will you come 'ome along o' me?"

"Yes, I will. But wheres—you know—where's number two, the wretched woman who beguiled me and stole me from you?"

"She is in the 'ospital," replied Mrs. Smiffins, calmly.

"In the 'ospital?"

"Yes, she and me met one night in the New Cut, and I went for her in the goose. She's very bad ever since. They say her leg's broken and one eye's out, and her left arm'll never be of any use to her no more."

This terrible announcement of the awful fate which had befallen the second wife of the unhappy Bigamini had a peculiar effect on him. He danced with rage, and actually struck his better half in the eye.

"What!" he said, as he fell into Mr. Mole's arms. "You have done that, have you? Hang me if I don't serve you the same! Get out! Be off! Vanish!"

The spirit he picked up all at once was wonderful.

"E's it me! Oh, the brute! It ain't the first time, though. I'll lock him up for it. Call a police."

"Bother the police," replied Bigamini. "Hold her tight, Mr. Mole, we are fellow sufferers—hold her like a man."

"It's all very well to say hold her," said Mr. Mole, "but she's heavy, and I don't like other men's leavings. Perhaps she'll fasten on me."

"I'd do the same for you. Don't be down-hearted—stick on to her."

"Will he? I'd like to see him," said Mrs. Smiffins.

She twisted herself out of Mr. Mole's grasp, and dealing him a blow with her umbrella, added:

"You're another of them, are you? Take that—and that!"

"My dear madam!" said Mr. Mole, putting his hands over his head to protect it.

"I'll let you know!"

"After um!" said Monday, eagerly. "Go 'long, mum. He's gone. Sharp's um word."

Mrs. Smiffins left off belaboring Mr. Mole and ran after her husband.

She overtook him in the street, but doubling, he gave her the slip, and was soon tearing up the street.

Mrs. Smiffins, who had followed him all way from London on the strength of information supplied by detectives, endeavored to overtake him.

Her efforts were vain.

He flew on the wings of the wind, and she returned to the hotel where she was lodging, determined to be on the lookout for him next day.

Mr. Mole was glad to be released from such a termagant.

"Monday," he said, timidly, "is that she-fiend gone?"

"Yes, sare; am gone right enough."

"Thank heaven for that crowning mercy," replied Mr. Mole. "Give me some more wine my sable Ganymede. Be my cup-bearer, Monday."

"Yes, sare," replied Monday.

"Here's confusion to all women, married or unmarried," said Mr. Mole.

"Not all, sare," replied Monday, with a grin.

"I don't know. There may be some good women, but I'll be jiggered if I've had the luck to meet with any of them, Monday."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in thar," said Monday.

His wife Ada entered, carrying in her hands young Jack Harkaway.

"Ah! Mast' Jack; 'ow um do, young Mast' Jack?" asked Monday, patting the little fellow on the head.

The child looked up and crowed at him.

"He frets after his ma," said Ada.

"Poor dear," cried Mr. Mole. "I suppose he does. Bless his heart! I fear he'll have to fret about his father next."

"Indeed! Has anything happened to Mr. Harkaway, sir?"

"There is a report that he's captured by the brigands."

"Oh, dear me! What bad news!" exclaimed Ada, in dismay.

"I hope it may not be true, but it would be sad if mother and father should be taken prisoners by these wretches."

"It's a pity that we never left England, sir."

"So it is. Never mind. At the last moment I shall show the Naples people what I am made of," cried Mr. Mole.

"You, sir?"

"Yes, my dear. I will rescue Harkaway and his wife, too, when the time comes. Wait a bit. I am letting Carden and Harvey and that humptious little man they call the coxswain do what they can, and in due time I shall come and show them what I can do."

"Mist' Mole, him do it," said Monday.

"Yes," answered Mole, grandly, "I'm like a race-horse, and always come with a rush when I'm called."

"I hope, sir, you will put everything right," answered Ada, rocking the child in her arms.

He was a fine boy, going on four years of age.

But being very sleepy and missing his father and mother, he was more inclined to sleep or cry than talk.

"Now, my little man," said Mr. Mole, "how do you find yourself?"

"I want to go and kill brigands," he said.

Mr. Mole was delighted at this declaration of young Jack Harkaway.

"Bravo!" he cried, "the youngster's made of the right stuff, eh?"

"Him chip of um old block, sare, and when say that can't say any more," answered Monday.

"Good-night," said Mr. Mole. "Take him to bed, Ada, and tell him we'll soon have his mamma back."

Ada bore her young charge away, promising that he should be more respectful in future. Mr. Mole poured out a tumbler of wine, which he drank carefully.

"Monday," he said, "it's my opinion that child will turn out a regular trump."

"Never had no doubt umself, sare."

"To-morrow I shall go out and engage in the pleasant excitement of brigand-hunting."

Mr. Mole threw himself in the arm-chair

and drank another brimming tumbler of iced Lachryma Christi.

"This wine improves on acquaintance," he said, with an appreciative smack of the lips. "Do you know, Monday, I rather like Naples."

"It fine place, sare, if no brigand thief."

"Bother the brigands. What are they, after all? Why, I'd undertake to eat a dozen of them before breakfast."

"Brigand rather tough, sare," said Monday.

"It happened that Mr. Mole's back was to the door. He did not see Carden, Harvey and the little coxswain who had come in search of him. They heard him say that he would eat a dozen brigands before breakfast, and stopping short, they made signs to Monday not to betray their presence, while they remained perfectly quiet in the doorway.

"The fact is," said Mr. Mole, lighting a cigarette, "that these Oxford men are humbugs."

"Mast' Jack not um 'umbug, sare," put in Monday.

"Yes, he is. A humbug, Monday, is a man who pretends to do that which he cant."

"Mist' Carden, him um 'umbug, sare?"

"Yes, he's the biggest humbug of the whole lot."

"What for him so big?"

"Didn't I see the brigand beat him in a single combat, disarm him, and generously give him his life?"

"Poor Mist' Carden, him bad luck."

"It was want of skill. Do you think, Matabella, that I would have accepted my life on those terms?"

"No, sare; you brave man, sare."

"Of course I am. I have proved my bravery on a hundred fields. Give me some more of that excellent tippie?"

"What um think of Mist' Harvey, sare?" asked Monday, as he filled his glass.

"Harvey has his good points, but he always was a rank coward."

"And um little coxswain, sare?"

"Oh, he's a Cambridge man, and I needn't tell you that the sight of blood would make a Cambridge man run a mile," answered Mr. Mole.

Suddenly the three university men stepped forward. They stood before the astonished Mole.

"Hallo, my dear boys!" he said cheerfully.

"Where did you spring from? This is an unexpected pleasure. Just whiling away an hour in a little friendly chat with poor Monday."

"So I am the biggest humbug of the lot, am I?" he said.

"Ha, ha! I saw you listening," replied Mole.

"Saw me?"

"Yes, I saw you, you sly dog, and you know it isn't wise to praise a man before his eyes, so I ran you down for the fun of the thing."

"And I'm a rank coward, am I?" said Harvey.

"Chaff, Harvey—all chaff!"

"What do you mean by saying that a Cambridge man will run a mile at the sight of blood?" demanded the little coxswain, angrily.

"So he will, Walter, so he will!"

"How can you prove it?"

"My dear boy, will not a brave man, if he sees blood being shed, run a mile, or two miles, to succor the distressed?"

"That's one way of getting out of it," said Walter, with a half smile.

"Look here, boy," exclaimed Mole, valiantly, "what is the use of squabbling among ourselves? The man that can't stand chaff isn't worth a rap. What I say is, let us go and rescue Harkaway and his wife."

"That's very good advice," replied Carden.

"Let me be your leader," continued Mole. "I will lead you to Torre del Greco. We will search the base of Mount Vesuvius together."

"Something must be done," remarked Carden.

"It shall. If Jack doesn't turn up to-night, we will start to-morrow early, and let our motto be—"Jack Harkaway, or we go under ourselves."

"Shake hands," said Carden; "we will rescue Harkaway."

Each repeated the word "To-morrow," and quitting Monday's room, they went up-stairs to prepare for dinner.

[To be continued in WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY, No. 1233, entitled "Jack Harkaway Trapped."]

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